

# **A Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Management and Motives of Volunteers within Special Olympics**

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I confirm that the word count of this thesis is less than 100,000

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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the man whose standards I strive to live by every day, my father.

To my daddy who watches down on us and has given me the strength to keep going through the tough days. Also, to my family whose unwavering belief and support make me feel very lucky and privileged to have them in my corner.



## Abstract

*“Take away volunteers... sport dies”* (deCruz, 2005; pg. 83). These words highlight the important role of volunteers within the sports sector. Additionally, the role of sports and physical activity in lowering health risks of people with disabilities has been well evidenced (van Schijndel-speet et al, 2014). Despite this, a number of barriers remain in place for people with disabilities to take part in regular sport and exercise. In particular, volunteers have the ability to play a pivotal role in the provision of sporting opportunities for people with disabilities, thus impacting their overall health. Research within the area of sports volunteering has had a central focus on the motives of volunteers. However, there is a lack of research concerning the potential variations of motives, demographics and engagement of volunteers aligned to disability sports organisations. With over one million volunteers, Special Olympics is one of the largest organisations who provide sporting opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, therefore making it an important case study within this field.

Therefore, this study aims to gain a thorough understanding of the people who volunteer for Special Olympics and why, as an organisation, it is effective in ensuring high retention rates. Alongside this, this body of work will offer an insight into the volunteers’ views on the practices and strategies of the Special Olympics organisation concerning volunteer management, recruitment and retention. As a multinational organisation, it is important to consider the potential impact of cultural expectations and variations on the overall policy development within such organisations.

A mixed methodology protocol was adopted to permit the collection of both a range and depth of data from both volunteers and staff across three Special Olympics National Programs; Special Olympics Ireland, Special Olympics Great Britain and Special Olympics Hellas (Greece). A total of 403 volunteers responded to an online survey which focused on demographics, volunteer experience, motivation and volunteer awareness, as well as knowledge of organisational practices and policies. Findings show the creation of a culture and community within Special Olympics, as a whole, which plays a more significant role in determining volunteer demographics and motivation than the cultural variations evident across individual National Programs. However, a number of inconsistencies exist both within and across

National Programs in the experiences of volunteers regarding some of the key processes of recruitment, communication and one's ability to engage.

Overall, a more co-ordinated response is required from National Programs in relation to the recruitment and retention of volunteers and this response needs to be tailored to the specific demographics of the volunteers within each National Program. Also, it is clear that Special Olympics provides a learning opportunity for other voluntary sporting and community organisations as its ability to transcend the sports and disability sectors and recruit volunteers from both is unique within this sector. Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Ulster University ethical committee.

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## Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
APA	American Psychiatric Association
ACL	Adjective Control List
BPFT	Brockport Physical Fitness Test
CBCL	Child Behaviour Checklist
CISS	Committee of Sports for the Deaf
CMQ	Coach Motivation Questionnaire
CPISRA	Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DG EAC	Directorate General Education and Culture
DSM-IV	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
EAC-EA	Educational, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency
FAS	Friendship Activity Score
FASA	Football Sports Skills Assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICC	International Co-ordinating Committee of the World Sports Organisations
ICD-10	International Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders -10
ICD-11	International Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders -11
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
ICIDH	International Classification of Impairments Disabilities and Handicap
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
IPC	International Paralympic Committee
MTV	Motivation to Volunteer
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office of National Statistics
SDT	Self Determination Theory
SEVMS	Sports Events Volunteers Motivation Scale

SO GB	Special Olympics Great Britain
SO Hellas	Special Olympics Hellas (Greece)
SO Ire	Special Olympics Ireland
TSO	Third Sector Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

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## Introduction

*Whatever part of our global community you touch, I hope it inspires you to be active in the pursuit of fitness, health, inclusion, and joy. And I hope it reminds you of the one word that animates all of us every day: Unite! (Tim Shriver, Special Olympics Chairman, 2017)*

In a welcome letter to all those involved in the Special Olympics movement prior to a series of National Games in 2017, Special Olympics Chairman, Tim Shriver, sums up the true meaning of Special Olympics when he speaks of joy, inclusion, inspiration and the desire of the organisation to unite everyone. In its 50<sup>th</sup> year, the organisation continues to provide training and competition opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities as well as its status as a transformative movement that is driven by and for the social benefit of people with Intellectual Disabilities.

As a volunteer led organisation, which has developed exponentially into a multinational organisation in 172 countries world-wide, 5 million athletes and over 1.1 million volunteers (Special Olympics, 2016), it has required an ever growing level of professionalisation. Like many volunteer led organisations, continued growth leads to paid employees taking over a number of the roles previously undertaken by volunteers, which can have a negative impact on the motivations of some. Therefore, it is imperative for research to be conducted so as to understand the mind-set of both the volunteers and the organisation to enhance the experience of the volunteers, thus aiding the service provided to the athletes.

## Motivation

The author's interest in the field of volunteering and Special Olympics began before her career in academia as she first registered as a volunteer within Special Olympics Ireland for the National Games in Belfast in 2006. Motivation for this was to have a fun few days with friends to celebrate completing our undergraduate degree as a one off event. However, over 13 years later, the ethos and mission of the organisation is engrained in the author who is still more active as a volunteer than ever. It is easy to see how experiences with the athletes and the many friends made through the organisation have impacted all aspects of life including career path. Throughout the rationale and methodological outline in this thesis, the author will highlight and address any concerns this may raise in relation to limiting bias.



A keen interest in both exercise psychology and sport in society through her studies and through numerous research roles in these fields sparked an interest in how Special Olympics operates and are successful in what they do. Interactions with multiple Special Olympics National Programs at various games and research summits furthered this interest due to the different practices across countries and different experiences for volunteers, staff and athletes. As Special Olympics Ireland does not currently have a Unified Sports Program, the potential of the program to meet the mission of the organisation in developing greater levels of inclusion of people with Intellectual Disabilities within their communities is self-evident.

## Background

Due to the complex nature of volunteering and the very many definitions associated with it, this thesis will discuss the concept of volunteerism providing a comprehensive review of the volunteer sector, its value and the current demographics of people volunteering world-wide. Additionally, disability is a term which has proved difficult to define, with many approaches being adopted throughout its academic study. Therefore, over the course of chapters one to three, these fields will be dissected so as to critically assess the published literature available to date. The clear links between these areas of study will be evident and the requirement of research that begins to address the complex issues of undertaking research in this field will be explored in order to develop a rigorous methodological approach and outline a program of research in Chapter Four, which in turn allows these issues to be addressed in even greater detail.

## The research aims and objectives

Throughout the early chapters of this thesis, the gaps evident within the published literature will be outlined in detail. These have led to the development of a comprehensive program of study, with the overarching aim of determining who volunteers, why they volunteer and the role culture and policy can play in the behaviours and intention of those undertaking these roles within Special Olympics. Therefore, as a result, a number of key objectives emerge, These include:

1. To conduct a cross-cultural analysis of the motives of volunteers
2. To determine the motives of volunteers within Special Olympics
3. To gain an understanding of the volunteers' views of the processes and structures of volunteer management and retention within Special Olympics
4. To determine if the policies surrounding volunteer management vary between cultures and National Programs in order to allow for a better understanding around

whether an overarching strategy may emerge in relation to the management of volunteers within third sector organisations

5. To inform policy advisement for Special Olympics in terms of the management processes involved in volunteer recruitment, training and retention
6. To outline lessons to be learned from the Special Olympics case to the benefit of other volunteer organisations

One particular difficulty faced in addressing these aims was the fusion of three sets of literature that were required; disability sports, volunteerism and sports culture. Whilst this thesis will demonstrate that these areas are inextricably linked, they each possess their own complexities, which must be explored through a detailed analysis of extant literature.

## Methodology

A mixed methodological approach was developed to address the complexities of these fields of study. Firstly, the utilisation of a large scale, online survey provided access to a large number of participants to gauge a wide variety of opinions, experiences and motivations of volunteers, one that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data. Subsequently, this informed the interview schedules used in phase two of data collection with interviews being conducted with both staff and volunteers within each of the National Programs. This garnered of both the individual and organisational perspectives on the policies, practices and strategies employed by the organisation. A detailed outline of the methodology will be provided in chapter four.

## The structure of the thesis

The initial three chapters of this thesis provide a comprehensive discussion on the fields of research that impact on the context of this study. Volunteerism, motivation, culture and disability are all impacted by the study of Special Olympics. These fields are all complex in their own right - thus the aim of outlining the body of literature in each case will allow for a discussion of the links between them and the impact each may have on the other. The experience and satisfaction levels of the volunteer has a major impact on the motivation and intention to continue to volunteer. Research suggests large variations in the demographics of volunteers within different sectors, which highlights the interesting case study of Special Olympics as one that transcends both the sports and disability sectors.

Chapter one will highlight the issues in defining and measuring volunteerism. There have been numerous attempts within the published literature, all agree on the overarching

features involved in this action, such as being free from coercion from others and being an act undertaken for the purposes of helping or benefiting others. The aim of this chapter is to contextualise the volunteering sector and the impact within the sports sector. In doing so, it begins to draw on the research within the volunteer management literature focusing on sport and recreation. Extensive research within the area indicates two of the key features of sports volunteer research are Mega Sports Events Volunteers and Motivation of Volunteers. Therefore, this chapter will analyse the literature within these areas and highlight issues within the research. It is clear that despite the widely acknowledged complexity of volunteerism, gaps within the literature exist due to the primary focus on these areas. Utilising event volunteers exposes the researcher to a large sample size; however it may risk losing the important sub sample of long term volunteers who vary in experiences and motivations. Finally, of utmost importance to organisations who rely on the 'work' of their volunteers, is the retention of these volunteers to avoid such individuals suffering burnout and 'falling through the gaps' of the organisation.

The focus of chapter two will switch to the field of disability. Within the context of this thesis, disability is a key feature due to the unique nature of its place within the volunteering sector. Historically, people with disabilities have very often been isolated and ostracised from society and their communities. They have experienced, and to a certain degree continue to experience, barriers in many areas including employment, healthcare and physical activity. The volunteer workforce has a central role to play in helping to break down these barriers and enabling people with disabilities to contribute in a meaningful way to their communities. Understanding the history of societal perceptions of disability and how this has evolved will enable researchers to ascertain how volunteers can impact this field. People with disabilities have higher requirements for healthcare as they are more predisposed to conditions such as Type 2 diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease, conditions which may be improved by physical activity. However, despite this, people with disabilities have less opportunities for participation. Disability sport has been a relatively recent phenomenon and has an ever-increasing role to play in both improving the health of people with disabilities and also the perceptions of people with disabilities by society as a whole. As already outlined, Chapter one will highlight the rates of volunteerism within the sports sector. It is therefore possible to postulate that with the increased need for sporting opportunities for people with disabilities that volunteers have an important role to play in this provision. Therefore, the clear links between chapter one and chapter two will, in turn, be critically assessed throughout chapter three.

A defining feature of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) is their structure as one consisting primarily of volunteers and their lack of governance from the State. Stringent policies and requirements are placed on this sector by governments and funding bodies, which have led to a growing professionalisation of TSOs so as to allow them to provide better justifications for their spending and service provision. This will be discussed throughout chapter three as it has a significant impact on the volunteers who provide such services. A formalisation of the volunteering process and the introduction of paid employees increases the risk of volunteers becoming demotivated due to feeling marginalised from roles they would previously have undertaken. Chapter three will therefore provide a comprehensive overview of this area before discussing the impact this has on volunteer behaviours and intentions to continue to volunteer with particular interest in the sports sector. A Case study example of Special Olympics will be used to highlight the development of disability sports provision and the utilisation of the volunteer workforce for said provision. From the discussions provided in chapter three, it will be clear that there are several gaps existing in the literature within the field of disability sports provision and the impact of volunteers on this situation. Despite the importance of ensuring long term volunteer retention, the impact of the organisations such as Special Olympics and their initiatives for sports provision on the volunteers has been largely ignored (Peachey et al. 2015) thus highlighting further the requirement for a program of research as that which will be outlined in this thesis.

Building on the body of work outlined in the initial chapters, chapter four focuses on the rationale underpinning this research program and the methodological approach to be adopted. Throughout the early stages of the chapter, a justification for the approach will be provided based on an analysis of the abundance of data collection tools and theoretical positioning undertaken within the complex topics examined within this thesis. Volunteer research has predominantly utilised a quantitative based paradigm with there being less qualitative research undertaken as a result. The proposed research, which was subsequently carried out in this program of work, will utilise a mixed methodological approach encompassing both paradigms. As such, the theoretical underpinning of this work becomes more complex, however, adopting a relativist constructionism viewpoint, the study design will be outlined in great detail.

The 'data chapters' (five to seven) provide a detailed outline and discussion of the three key themes to emerge from the large data set drawn across the three participating countries; The Volunteers, Culture and Engagement, and Policy and Strategy Awareness. Chapter five focuses on the volunteers, their demographics and their motivations. In order to aid and

improve their retention rates of volunteers, it is important for voluntary organisations to understand who volunteers for them and why they do so. As chapter five will show, Special Olympics volunteers are demographically different in some ways to their mainstream sport counterparts, for example, the gender breakdown of volunteers within this research indicates stronger links with the reported figures within the disability sector. This provides evidence to support the premise that Special Olympics is a niche market that transcends both the sports and the disability sectors. The Coach Motivation Questionnaire (CMQ) will also provide evidence that Special Olympics volunteers are more likely to be motivated by intrinsic elements of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) Continuum. It also begins to address the question of cultural variations and similarities amongst Special Olympics volunteers thus questioning the role of culture across National Programs, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six. The ability of Special Olympics to maintain a strong, highly motivated volunteer workforce will demonstrate that there are many potential learning outcomes for other voluntary sector organisations who may struggle with recruitment and retention. One of the key motivating factors appears to be the athletes themselves, with volunteers focused on areas such as empowerment of the athletes as opposed to their own desires and intentions.

Chapter six moves forward to a detailed discussion of the impact of culture and the engagement of volunteers and their intention to continue to volunteer with Special Olympics. Research to date shows inconsistent data on the number of hours people spend volunteering. Despite this, it is vital for the efficiency of organisations to ensure volunteers remain with them for a long period of time whilst partaking in as many hours as they have. There are many factors impacting this including their free leisure time, their loyalty to the organisation and the levels of autonomy they experience. It is evident from the initial three chapters that culture can play an important role in informing policy within organisations and indeed psycho-social research more broadly, particularly within sectors such as the sports sector. By providing an in-depth analysis of how the culture and sense of community is paramount to the success of Special Olympics, it will be clear that organisations who perhaps struggle to recruit and retain volunteers can learn several lessons to aid the experiences of autonomy and loyalty of their volunteers. Furthermore, it will highlight that inconsistencies exist across the experiences of volunteers within Special Olympics, which can have a negative impact on the perceptions of the organisation and its task of illustrating how volunteers can become more engaged. Addressing such inconsistencies will improve the experiences of those volunteers and will help enhance the overall retention rates.

The final data chapter; policy awareness and strategy will highlight the requirement for consistent and transparent policies and strategies surrounding the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Despite a lack of these within the National Programs examined in this program of work, Special Olympics has been extremely successful in engaging volunteers within all levels of the organisation. However, the lack of coherent strategy has led to increased workloads on staff, which in turn has hindered progress to where the organisation has the potential to move to. The opinions of both staff and volunteers will be discussed in relation to the key policy areas of recruitment, communication and, more broadly, the building of the volunteer experience. Each of the countries involved in this research were, at the time of interview, in the process of developing such policies therefore this study has the potential to provide learning opportunities on the processes being implemented for both Special Olympics as an organisation as well as the voluntary sector as a whole. Options for greater collaboration between organisations should be considered for the continued success of the voluntary sector.

This thesis concludes by outlining its contribution to the field of literature of volunteering in disability sports and provides a number of avenues of research that may be explored. From a critical perspective, it confirms Special Olympics, as a sub-culture, that takes precedence over the cultural practices and traditions of some countries. Key learning opportunities for other organisations, both in relation to what Special Olympics do, and what Special Olympics do not do, highlights the potential impact that this research can offer for the voluntary sector.

However, when conducting research, it is important for a researcher to consider the potential limitations as these will also inform research practices within this field for future work. The very nature of the term 'inactive volunteer' indicates a lack of involvement and engagement within the organisation to which they were once active. Therefore, when reporting on activity levels of volunteers, results should be approached with caution. This challenge for researchers and organisations is to enhance the engagement with these volunteers so as to learn from the perceived barriers to volunteering and thereby providing invaluable lessons and informing potential future directions of research.



# Chapter 1: Volunteerism

## 1.1 Introduction

Volunteers play an important role in the sustainability of civil society with the act of volunteering being an important social behaviour (Cnaan & Park, 2015). In order to fully understand the importance of volunteers within the disability sports sector, one must first consider the complex area of volunteerism within academic literature. It is therefore vital, not only to consider what volunteerism is, but where it emerges from, as well as extant theories of volunteerism and motivation, which have sought to explain why people choose to volunteer, particularly within the sports sector. One key element of volunteering, which has been left relatively under studied, is that of the impact of national culture on both volunteering rates and behaviours. Therefore, it is imperative that this chapter seeks to provide an overview of the field of volunteering as a whole, in addition to outlining the impact of volunteers within sports clubs and events. Through analysis of the current body of literature this chapter will explore the complexity of the field of study of volunteering, thus identifying the gaps that continue to exist within research.

## 1.2 Defining elements of volunteering

### 1.2.1 Volunteerism defined

It may be cogently argued that volunteerism can be traced back as far as the early settlers in North America. It was vital for the survival of these settlers to assist each other with the gathering of resources, building work and the defence of their land and homes. Whilst there appears to be something that they can benefit from, equally it can be argued that the element of free will and the lack of monetary reward resulted in this being considered a voluntary act. The word volunteer, whilst appearing to be relatively straightforward to define, has caused much debate surrounding its exact meaning throughout the published literature. Definitions of the act of volunteering again focus on the central elements of choice and free will. The direct absence of material gain also appears to form an integral part of any agreed definition of volunteerism. Van Til (1988: 6) suggests that it is the *“helping action of an individual that is valued by him or her, and yet is not aimed directly at material gain or mandated or coerced by others”*. However, Cnaan et al. (1996) suggest that work is required to make the parameters of what constitutes a voluntary act clearer as they believe it has caused confusion for people attempting to complete surveys outlining their volunteering experience. Wilson (2000) therefore further defined this practice as *“any activity in which*



*time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause*" (p 215). This is a sentiment supported by Gottlieb and Gillespie (2008) who defined it as *"unpaid work that benefits others to whom one owes no obligation"* (pg 400). Due to the complexities and diverse range of potential voluntary acts and indeed the individuals undertaking such acts, it has become common for its definition to be given as a more open-ended interpretation, such as that proposed by the UN General Assembly

*"A wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation undertaken of free will for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor"* (United Nations, 2013, pg5)

The contribution made by volunteers to such a wide variety of organisations can sometimes be forgotten. In fact, to recognise this contribution, the question 'can you imagine a world without volunteers?' was posed at the beginning of the 2004 World Leisure Congress (Thibault, 2004 cited in Cusklely, Hoye & Auld, 2006). Cuskelly, Hoye & Auld (2006) suggest that without the contribution of volunteers, the lives of many people in the developed world would be adversely affected as many activities would either disappear or significantly increase in cost.

### 1.2.2 Altruism

Within literature, volunteering is often described as having an altruistic element due to there being no gain for the individual completing the task or the behaviour. The term 'altruism' has caused much debate throughout the literature with the definition changing over the years. From Hoffman's (1978) interpretation of the term, altruism has been defined as a *"behaviour such as helping or sharing that promotes the welfare of others without conscious regard for one's own self-interest."* (Hoffman cited in Haski-Leventhal, 2009; pg 272). However, this differs from that of Smith (2000) who suggests that every act offers some form of self-gain or egotistical benefit to the individual performing the act and that true altruism does not exist. Research into the areas of altruism will, in the majority of cases, consider or investigate volunteering, as there has been much debate about the connection between the two. Overall, within research there are inextricable links between the fields of altruism and volunteering. Haski-Leventhal (2009) states that *"not every act of volunteering is altruistic and not every altruistic act is voluntary."* (pg 271).

Another key area of debate concerns the definition or indeed existence of altruism in the context of discussions around self-sacrifice. Whilst some research has implied that an act

cannot be considered to be altruistic unless there is some form of sacrifice or harm for the individual (Sigmund and Hauvret, 2002), others have argued that although self-sacrifice may be present, it is not a defining feature of altruism (Batson, 1991). These obvious links between altruism and volunteering must be taken into consideration when studying the motivations of volunteers as these definitions suggest that altruism will be one of the motivators of volunteers but also that others do exist, particularly when there is a lack of altruism despite an individual deciding to volunteer.

### **1.3 Volunteer Sector**

Volunteer opportunities arise in many areas or sectors of society, however, the majority of these take place in Third Sector Organisations (TSOs), not for profit organisations and charities. Determining the true level of volunteering can be problematic as countries have varying reporting methods of this data. Informal volunteering often goes unreported as its ad hoc nature suggests a lack of accurate records of numbers and other demographics surrounding the volunteers. This section will therefore discuss recent reports and academic literature on the numbers and demographics of volunteering. It will then focus on the area of volunteering relevant to this thesis; the sports sector.

#### **1.3.1 Volunteer numbers**

A 2010 report by GHK consulting indicated a significant increase in the volunteering rates across Europe in the preceding decade; however, comprehensive reports on this scale have not been published in the interim period and therefore comparison of this trend more recently is not possible. It is estimated that global volunteering hours currently equate to 109 million employees on a full time equivalent (UNV, 2018) with 29.2 million of those within Europe and Central Asia. However, the United Nations recognise the challenges faced whilst collating these figures. The diversity inter- and intra- countries in respect to their definition and viewpoint of volunteering and also their cultural variations as well as the variability of the data collection are all considerations in this respect. Furthermore, data collection can be inaccurate due to the levels of informal volunteering that goes unreported as well as it being difficult to gain access to informal volunteers because, as its very definition suggests, an absence of a registration database for said volunteers. It is estimated that 80% of volunteering activities worldwide occur on an informal basis. When placed within a European and Central Asia context, this figure drops slightly, with 73.3% of volunteering occurring on an informal basis (UNV, 2018).

Recent figures from the Community Life Survey 2016-2017 (DCMS, 2016) found that 63% of adults in England volunteered within the previous 12 months, with 39% volunteering at least once per month. Similar to the UN report, this indicated that informal volunteering activities were more common with a range of 37% to 52% apparent. However, it did also report a decrease in the proportion of volunteering from 70% in 2013-2014 to 63%. This supports findings of earlier studies where worldwide trends have shown contrasting figures regarding volunteer numbers. Whilst Australia have reported a decline in those volunteering at events, they have found that those who are volunteering are committing more and more hours (Lyons & Fabiansson 1998). However, one point not addressed is the potential reasons for the decline or indeed the increase in volunteering hours. Lyons & Fabiansson (1998) do not address the possibility that the reason hours are increasing is because the volunteers in question feel obligated to fill the gaps left by their peers who have since departed their role. This is potentially an issue that organisations could address and leaves the unanswered questions of whether there is too much pressure being placed on current volunteers to fill roles/ gaps in service, rather than directing their attention to recruiting new volunteers to fill those roles.

Reid and Selbee (2000) conducted a comparison of the 1987 and 1997 statistics from the Canadian Survey of Volunteer activity and actually found a reversal of the findings in Australia. Whilst the number of people volunteering increased, there was a 22% decline in the average number of volunteering hours provided by each individual. Many researchers have attributed these statistics to changes in the working patterns and commitments of the modern woman (Smith 2004; Tiehen, 2000). Increased financial burdens placed on families due to changing economic climates have forced many women back into the workplace. Many have also chosen to pursue their own careers, in addition to the role of mother and caregiver which impacts the amount of free time a woman can commit to a voluntary activity. Gardó et al (2014) recognise the sharp contrasts between the number of people volunteering (social penetration) and how the number of volunteering hours completed is measured across countries. Variations are often caused by the cultural idiosyncrasies found amongst volunteering behaviours and activities across western societies (Gardó et al, 2014; Charities Aid Foundation, 2014). Within the context of this thesis, the only country to appear in the top 10 volunteering countries either for time spent volunteering or number of volunteers is Ireland with 41% of people volunteering in the month prior to being interviewed (Charities Aid Foundation, 2014). This report also highlights the importance of culture within volunteering as three former Soviet Union states appear in the top 10 indicating a lasting

effect of the traditional soviet culture of 'subbotnik' referring to the term used for people volunteering on a Saturday.

Volunteer research generally reports very inconsistent findings across industries, population groups and cultures regarding the gender breakdown. The 2018 State of the Worlds Volunteerism Report (UN 2018) suggests that contrary to popular belief women are more likely to engage in formal volunteering than informal volunteering, 51% of formal volunteering is undertaken by women (49% men) and 59% informal versus 41% men. This leads to overall global volunteering figures of 57% women to 43% men. This gap narrows when placed within the European and Central Asian context with 54% women and 46% men. Volunteers who specifically worked with people with disabilities were found to be more likely to be female (70.6%) than male (29.4%) (Janus & Misorek, 2018). Whilst little research in this field exists, a study of the attitudes of youth volunteers towards peers with a disability at a sports camp (Fort et al. 2017) did report 58.5% female to 41.5% male youths and Lilburn, Breheny and Pond (2018) recruited a ratio of 5:1 female to male volunteers amongst people working with an older population. There were also a number of other volunteering studies within this field which did not report the gender breakdown of participants (Breithaupt et al., 2017). The main focus of research in this area looks at volunteers with disabilities and their impact on inclusion and communities thus leaving very little literature available for comparison. Additionally, some of the research which reports gender breakdown outlines the potential bias in their results with some focusing on voluntary opportunities for women (Veludo-de-Oliveira, Pallister & Foxall, 2015), which may skew their data (90% female volunteers).

It is clear from this research that there are a number of inconsistencies in the reporting of volunteering figures worldwide with some suggesting that the general trend is increasing with others finding a decrease in volunteering. It is therefore imperative that research studies focus on the specific population relative to their field of interest to enable comparisons of their trends. However, it also indicates larger, multinational studies are required to assess volunteer numbers worldwide and provide a true reflection of the value of volunteers to their societies.

### **1.3.2 Sports Volunteers**

One sector that relies heavily on the work of volunteers is that of the sports industry. Doherty's (1998) postulation that without the work of volunteers, the sports sector would struggle to exist in its current format or function at its current levels is thus having a severe

impact on the general health and fitness of the population remains as pertinent amongst the more contemporary body of research with de Cruz (2005) suggesting that if we “*take away volunteers.... sport dies*” (pg. 83). Furthermore, volunteers are one of the key reasons for the cost-effective operation of not for profit sports clubs and organisations (Schlesinger, Klenk & Nagel, 2015; Taylor, Panagouleas & Nichols, 2012). The UN designated 2001 as the ‘International Year of the Volunteer’ as an attempt to heighten awareness of the need for volunteerism within communities, a plan that appears to have fallen to the wayside amongst governments and organisations in subsequent years (Cuskelly, Hoyer & Auld, 2006).

Volunteers within the sports sector can be sub categorised into two main areas; those volunteering at events and those working within sports clubs and organisations in roles such as coaches (Khoo & Englehorn, 2011). In order for these organisations to progress and develop better strategies for recruiting managing and retaining their volunteers it is essential for them to understand why they have chosen to give their free time and expertise to a particular club or organisation. The relatively high cost of the recruitment, training and retention process makes it even more important for an organisation to understand the motivations of their volunteers.

### **1.3.3 Volunteer Management in Sport and Recreation**

When organising major sporting events, managers encounter many challenges, not least of all, ensuring the event is economically viable. The financial implications of this exacerbates the need to rely on volunteers, therefore highlighting the fact that many sports organisations would simply not exist if not for the work of their dedicated volunteers (Doherty & Carron, 2003). The London Olympics and Paralympics Games 2012 recruited approximately 70,000 volunteers with an estimated 240,000 applicants for the roles (IOC, 2012a). Previous Olympic games also required vast numbers with 41,000 in Sydney 2000 and 45,000 assisting in Athens in 2004 (Costa, Chalip, Green & Simes 2006)

As previously mentioned, volunteers are vital for the success of the Sport and Recreation industry. The roles of the volunteer can differ greatly ranging from management and administration roles such as league co-ordinators, registration clerks, team managers and referees to more front-line volunteers such as coaches, assistant coaches or chaperones. These roles can be categorised into two main forms; nurturance roles and leadership roles. As its name suggests the leadership role refers to the management and organisational style roles as opposed to the hands on, one on one nature of the nurturance roles. It has been predicted that charities will experience a spike in demand for their services by up to 70%

(Consultancy.UK, 2016). Therefore, the voluntary sector would come under greater pressure to fill the gap in human services. The growth in this third sector leads to as much emphasis being placed on the need to manage volunteers as there is to manage paid employees. Coupled with the current economic climate, it appears that Smiths (1986) prediction is coming to fruition and therefore the need to continue to develop more efficient strategies for managing volunteers is paramount.

This significance placed on the value of volunteers at major sporting events has led to an increase in demand. In recent decades, the number of events enlisting the services of volunteers has vastly increased (Getz 1998; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules & Ali 2003), thus leading to organisations experiencing problems when trying to recruit the numbers they require. A more competitive market requires organisations to focus on the factors that will help them to recruit, manage and effectively retain volunteers (Costa et al 2006). This is perhaps one of the main reasons why a significant portion of the research to date looking at sports volunteers has focused on those volunteering at major sporting events.

In addition to the obvious economic benefits, there are also a number of non-economic benefits. Tedrick & Henderson (1989) suggest that volunteers are viewed as more credible and sincere by the beneficiaries of the organisations. They also suggest that being bereft of the financial gains that employment brings, volunteers can be more objective and therefore provide constructive feedback for the good of the organisation. The third benefit concerns the stress and pressures of employment. This allows the volunteer the opportunity to adopt innovative methods of delivery in a relaxed manner without facing the stress of performance targets etc.

### **1.3.4 Mega Sports Events Volunteers**

Mega Sports Events can garner attention on a global scale for the host city which can therefore place a lot of pressure on them to ensure their city, their country and their culture is represented in a positive way. A successful event can lead to the creation of employment, tourism, urban regeneration and economic development for the hosts (Baum & Lockstone; 2007). It is therefore imperative to ensure that there are adequate or sufficient numbers of personnel to facilitate the smooth running of the event, with many of these events now utilizing the skills and services of volunteers; 70,000 volunteered as Games Makers for the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics (IPC; 2012) and over 13,000 volunteered at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games (12,500 Clyde-siders and 1,200 Host City volunteers) (GCG report 2014). It is possible to see from these figures that volunteers appear to be attracted

to such events with many events often over subscribing in terms of their required numbers; London received 240,000 applications (IOC, 2012a) and Glasgow received over 50,000 applications. This is often overcome through a formalisation process with volunteers having to go through an application and interview to be assigned a volunteering role. In order to gain a better understanding of how best to recruit such numbers for events and therefore increase the efficiency of the training and retention of volunteers who are critical to the success of mega events, this research must be continued (Cuskelly, Hoye & Auld, 2006; Doherty, 2009).

A rationale which may, in some part, explain why recruitment of volunteers for a mega sports event appears to be extremely successful is that the wide variety of sporting and non-sporting roles available allows for the matching of the individuals motivations to the role and their specific situation (Clary & Snyder; 1999). Furthermore, by better understanding the motives of the volunteers, event organisers will be better equipped to enhance the volunteer experience and participation thus allowing them to develop their volunteer management strategies (Kim, Fredline & Cuskelly, 2018; Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016). For the continued development of this sector, links with long term volunteering should be enhanced to gain more knowledge of how this can be applied to both volunteering on an episodic basis as well as longer term volunteering.

Due to the convenience in terms of access to large numbers of participants thus aiding data collection, mega sports events have formed the basis of the majority of research within the sports volunteer field of research. Roche (1994) outlined that whilst a mega sports event is short term, it holds long term consequences, primarily in relation to the economic, political, social and cultural consequences and motives for the host city, the country as a whole and indeed the volunteers themselves. Furthermore, Roche (2000) found that the hosting of a mega event has grown so vastly in terms of cost that the organisation has become a collaborative process between the sporting governing bodies; International non-governmental organisations including FIFA and the IOC and the national government with global companies in a partnership role providing sponsorship. Despite these costs, as already outlined, the benefits are considered to outweigh the costs due to the increased tourism, employment and economic development (Baum & Lockstone, 2007; Higham, 2005).

There has been much discussion surrounding the motives of sports event volunteers with suggestions that the management of the volunteers should be co-ordinated to provide autonomy (Costa, Chalip, Green & Simes; 2006). Allen and Bartle (2014) found that the

engagement of the volunteers is primarily based on their perceptions of the autonomy supportive climate of the event and their levels of intrinsic motivation, whilst it was also outlined by Shaw (2009) that it is extremely important to further investigate the experiences of the volunteer in relation to how they are managed. An approach focusing more on the opportunities for the volunteer to learn and gain training may be a more effective volunteer retention tool than the human resource management approach investigated by Cuskelly et al (2006). Gardó et al (2014) proposed a unique and original approach of focusing on the expected and perceived value placed on volunteering at mega events which may be beneficial in the study of sports events. However, the focus of this study was solely on a religious mega event which may, by its nature be influenced by cultural or religious beliefs thus impacting on the values of individual volunteers.

Based on the self-determination theory continuum, to be discussed later in the chapter, Allen & Shaw (2009) found sports event volunteers expressed three main themes of motivation; intrinsic, self-determined extrinsic and extrinsic motivation led by a lack of external control. They further go on to state that adopting a self-determined framework supports the premise that matching the motives of the volunteer to the role can increase levels of autonomy and competence thus increasing the likelihood of more efficient recruitment and retention rates of the volunteers. Within the context of Special Olympics, volunteers at a national event were found to show higher levels of altruistic (purposive) motivation in comparison to commitment and family tradition motives (Khoo & Engelhorn; 2011). This study was one of several to utilize the Sports Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS) to gain a better understanding of why mega sports events attract high numbers of volunteers. Similar motivators were found at four regional sporting events using the SEVMS. Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al (2015) identified three similar motivation types to Khoo and Engelhorn (2011); altruistic, social and 'indifferents' which consisted of extrinsic motivations. Therefore, overall, whilst sports events provide an excellent opportunity to investigate the motivations of volunteers, it is vital to further investigate long term volunteering to understanding if those volunteers have different motives in comparison to those who solely volunteer at sports events. This in turn may provide organisations with a better understanding of how to engage with the volunteers to enhance retention rates. It may also allow organisations to increase the numbers of those episodic, event volunteers transferring to long-term volunteering. When looking at factors impacting longer term volunteering, there has been a distinct lack of focus as the literature is dominated by research on the motivations of event volunteers. Amongst the research that discusses long term volunteering (Aydinli et al., 2016),



the complex nature of the field is further heightened through the discussion of explicit and implicit prosocial motivation in addition to the theories and constructions outlined below.

## **1.4 Motivation**

In general psychological terms, motivation can be seen as a process that not only initiates but continues to drive and maintain certain behaviours which involves biological, emotional, social and cognitive responses within the body.

Motivation contains three main strands or elements; direction, persistence and equifinality and has been a key focus of psychology research. The term motivation can have many different definitions to coincide with the context in which it is being applied. For example, it can be defined simply as an individual's personal goals, values and beliefs (De Naeghel et al. 2012). However, in a sporting context, it has been suggested that motivation is the direction and intensity of one's effort (Sage, 1977). The use of the term motivation can also have different meanings; a personality trait of an individual who can be described as a highly motivated person, or indeed an external force acting on an individual such as a student looking for the motivation to study, or someone looking for motivation to help them lose weight. To avoid any confusion or misunderstandings, it is vital for researchers to correctly identify the meaning and definition of motivation within the correct context. Within the area of volunteerism, motives for volunteering have been proposed by numerous researchers and theories of motivation have been applied, however, 'volunteer motivation' appears to lack a definition amongst researchers.

There are two main forms of motivation; intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation exists solely within the individual without the existence of external influences, for example, volunteering as a football coach because one loves football rather than for monetary gain. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside the individual and may involve material gain such as money or trophies or indeed be influenced or coerced by others.

### **1.4.1 Motivation theories**

Due to the complex nature of motivation, there has been no one theory that has definitively or wholly explained it. Theories such as Achievement Goal Theory, Self Determination Theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour have all been applied to best explain certain situations or indeed motivations within particular fields or industries. The literature surrounding volunteer motivation is no different and is vast and complex in nature. Two key theories are

identified in the body of literature as being relevant to volunteer motivation; Theory of Planned Behaviour and Self Determination Theory.

Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) suggest that the causal antecedents of behaviour are a process of logical thoughts and cognitions for an individual thus postulating that before a behaviour is performed, it is planned. Ajzen (1988) outlined three determinants of these intentions to perform a task (figure 1.1)

1. *Behavioural attitude* refers to an individual's attitudes or beliefs towards performing a particular behaviour, regardless of whether this attitude is positive or negative.
2. *Subjective norms* are also referred to as normative beliefs. Social pressures can greatly impact an individual's decision to perform or indeed not perform a specific behaviour.
3. *Perceived behavioural control* refers specifically to the perceived level of difficulty of the behaviour to be performed. This perceived level of difficulty may reflect on an individuals' previous experiences of this, or similar behaviours (Ajzen, 1988; 1991)

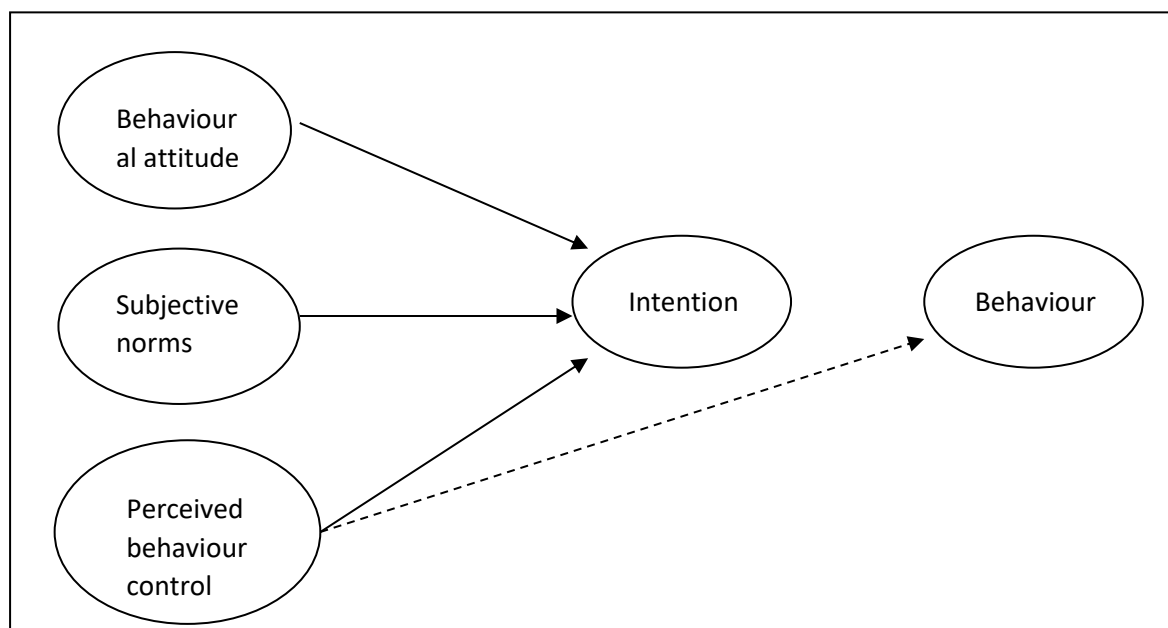


Figure 1.1 Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1988)

Kim et al (2009) propose that the Theory of Planned Behaviour in part explains an individual's intention to continue to volunteer due to possible links between psychological contracts;

represented by behavioural attitude and its interaction with behavioural control to influence an intention to perform or not perform a behaviour.

Support for this theory in relation to its ability to indicate intention to volunteer or determinants of volunteerism was reported by Warburton & Terry (2000). However, it does not appear to have the capability of focusing on the motivations of the volunteers. Additionally, researchers (Povey et al., 2002; Terry & O Leary, 1995) have found a lack of reliability in the measures typically used for the theory, particularly in relation to the scales for perceived behaviour control and have found that the more reliable measures of self-efficacy (Terry & O Leary, 1995) provide a better fit than those of perceived behaviour control. Overall, this evidence suggests that whilst there is merit in the research of volunteerism using the Theory of Planned Behaviour, it is important to explore other theories to gain a better understanding of the motivations of an individual to volunteer.

One concept that appears to be constant within the literature is that there are deeper psychological needs at the forefront of volunteer motivation. Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) outlines three core psychological needs; competence, relatedness and autonomy. Competence refers to an individual's desire to be effective both in the task they are performing and the environment they find themselves within. This recognises individuals for their effort, attitude and self-improvement. The need for relatedness can be defined as the universal desire that an individual possesses to feel connected and interact with another individual or group. The final strand of autonomy reflects an individual's desire to be in control of their own behaviour and the choices they make. An individual needs to feel a connection between an activity and their personal values. These three core psychological needs are essential for the optimal functioning of personal growth and social development within an individual (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Deci and Ryan (2002) suggest that different levels of self-determination exist along a continuum of motivational styles or regulations. The continuum highlights that people can be motivated for many different reasons (Gagne, Ryan and Bargmann, 2003). The most self-determined behaviour is classed as intrinsic motivation, which as stated earlier, is based on the premise that motivation is due to internal factors such as enjoyment of the task. The continuum suggests that extrinsic motivation can be further sub categorised into four levels; integrated, identified, introjected and external regulation. Integrated motivation outlines that an activity is pursued because *"it is congruent with other aspects of self"* (Taylor, Ntoumanis & Standage, 2008 pg 77). Moving further down the continuum, identified

motivation occurs when an individual regards an activity as being important or valuable to themselves. This may range from exercising for the health benefits it provides to volunteering due to the experience it provides for ones CV. Introjection refers to the form of motivation which is regulated by self-esteem in that a person will feel pride and confidence when they have performed a task well and less so when they have failed or not performed well. Finally, external regulation is the least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation and is primarily concerned with the obtaining of rewards or the avoidance of punishments. In addition to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, a state of amotivation is recognised when an activity is not pursued or undertaken due to a perceived lack of worthwhile reasons or motivations. This state is described as having a complete absence of self-determination (Ryan and Deci 2002) and within a volunteering context would refer to the behaviour or voluntary activity no longer being undertaken by the volunteer.

A third theory to be applied to the area of volunteerism more recently is that of Means End Theory developed by Gutmann (1982). Initially developed to help explain consumer behaviour, later research has applied it to the leisure industry to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence Greenway use (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001) or within the adventure sports area to help understand participation in these sports (Goldberg et al., 2000; McAvoy et al. 2006). Long & Goldenberg (2010) have suggested that the change in use of the theory and its application makes it more pertinent to volunteerism as its focus is more on the outcomes and values for an individual participating in sport and recreation as opposed to its original focus on the marketing and consumer elements of the industry. However, little research exists within this field to determine the pertinence of Means End Theory within a voluntary context.

#### **1.4.2 Volunteer Motivation**

The motivation of volunteers has been widely studied over the years with many different reasons being stated for an individual making the decision to volunteer. Knoke & Prensky (1984) have suggested three main categories for motivation to volunteer; utilitarian, normative and affective. The skills and experience that one can obtain by volunteering are classed as utilitarian incentives whilst normative refers more to the altruistic nature of the act; that is, the idea of volunteering to 'give something back'. Affective incentives to volunteering refer more to the social gains for an individual, meeting new people, forging new friendships and relationships and the self-esteem that can be associated with this.

Whilst the work of Knoke & Prensky (1984) focuses on the benefits and incentives which form the basis of a volunteers' motivation, Clary et al. (1998, 1999) suggest that motivation is based on a more functional approach as they identified six key functions which affect the motivation of a volunteer; Values, understanding, social, career related, protective and enhancement.

Caldwell and Andereck (1994) proposed a further approach to defining types of motivations amongst volunteers. Recognising the complexity of motivation, they defined three main factors; purposive, solidary and material. Purposive refers to incentives such as doing something that is good or beneficial for an individual or organisation. Solidary motives for volunteering are concerned with social interactions one gains through the act of volunteering. Material reasons refer to those rewards or privileges that may be gained by a volunteer. These factors were further developed by Farrell et al. (1998) whose study of volunteers at a Curling Championship categorised motivation into four factors; purposive and solidary like Caldwell and Andereck (1994) but also external traditions and commitments. The former referring to factors that affect the free time an individual has to volunteer such as family commitments. The latter, commitments, being the key skills and knowledge that connect an individual volunteer to an event. Research into the area of sports events volunteerism has found purposive incentives to be rated most highly among volunteers with solidary also rating highly (Farrell et al. 1998; Twynam et al. 2003; Khoo & Englehorn 2011). This amount of categorisation shows a lack of clarity and coherency to research in the volunteering sector. Whilst this research has been of paramount importance in determining future knowledge and understanding of the voluntary sector and highlights the complexity of this, it lacks a coherency in the definitions and categories proposed and has therefore, in some ways added to the complexity and lack of clarity.

One of the major activities to rely on the work of dedicated volunteers is the area of sports and recreation with these volunteers making up a large proportion of the overall numbers (Doherty 2008) and it is the approach taken by Clary et al. (1998, 1999) that forms the basis for a body of studies conducted on the motivations of sports volunteers. In one study of university students, Mirsafian & Mohamadinejad (2012) found enhancement and values to be the highest and lowest functions respectively as motivations for student sports volunteers. Despite these motivational factors, Cuskelly et al. (2006) have found that volunteer positions within sports organisations and programmes and in particular coaching positions are extremely difficult to fill. Further to this, Paiement (2007) has found that the retention of volunteer coaches in youth sport is low, suggesting that there may be issues to

be addressed to help improve this. A key factor in a volunteer's decision to continue to volunteer is that of satisfaction with the volunteer experience (Silverberg, Marshall & Ellis, 2001) and it is therefore recommended that organisations take steps to improve the experience for their volunteers to improve retention rates. There are many elements within the volunteering process which can impact the experience and satisfaction, ranging from their initial contact with the organisation, the recruitment process and their experiences pre, during and post activity such as an event or attendance at a sports club including communication prior to the activity, inclusion in or autonomy with their role in the activity and their ability or opportunity to feedback and influence change for future activities.

Taylor, Panagouleas & Nichols (2012) among others have found gender to be a major determinant of one's decision to volunteer with male rates being significantly higher than female volunteer rates, however this is thought to be due to the largely male dominated arena of organised sports. They have also found conflicting evidence from previous studies on the influence of age with Attwood et al. (2003) finding higher rates amongst the 16-24 year olds whilst Taylor et al. (2003) found higher rates amongst the 35-59 year olds. The findings of Taylor et al. (2012) perhaps suggest a need for individual organisations to study the socio-demographic break down of their volunteers as a method to address the balance of volunteers and indeed to develop a strategy to retain these volunteers that is best suited to their demographics. Special Olympics assess and release their volunteer demographics on a bi-yearly basis through their Reach Report outlining their progression as an organisation and their targets such as increasing the rate of youth volunteering.

### **1.4.3 Volunteer Satisfaction**

A basic assumption within the field of volunteerism is that there is an association between satisfaction and retention therefore implying that research is required to determine what aids volunteer satisfaction as Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) suggest that *"people will continue to volunteer as long as the experience as a whole is rewarding and satisfying"* (p.281). The issue of volunteer satisfaction is a complicated one with many factors influencing the level of satisfaction experienced by the volunteer. Satisfaction is improved when the volunteer has the opportunity to be part of an event or team, meet new people and expand their social network and also to aid in the achievement of job competence (Elstad 1997). In addition to these points, many researchers have found that communication between the volunteer and the organisation and the recognition by the organisation of the

volunteer's efforts are important in the satisfaction of the volunteer (Farrell et al. 1998; Johnston, Twynam & Farrell 2000; Reeser et al. 2005). Ma & Draper (2017) studied relationships between volunteer motivation and satisfaction to provide an insight into how intention to continue to volunteer may be impacted by this. They also provide further evidence for the argument highlighted that current comparisons are not possible as researchers utilize a variety of tools and surveys to assess volunteer motivation and satisfaction including Sports Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS, Khoo & Englehorn, 2011; Dickson et al, 2014), Sports Volunteer Motivation Scale (SVMS, Pauline & Pauline, 2009; McLean & Hamm, 2007) and the Volunteer Motivation Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS – ISE, Bang & Chelladurai, 2009; Bang & Ross, 2009; Van Sickle et al, 2015).

Volunteer satisfaction at a sporting event was found to have an important influence on an individual's intention to volunteer at future events. Volunteering at a curling event increased the probability of repeating the behaviour amongst 59.2% of their participants. Organisations must therefore ensure focus is placed on enhancing the satisfaction of the volunteers in addition to the smooth running of the event to maintain their volunteer base for future events. This potentially will have a positive impact on the financial and time costs associated with the volunteer recruitment process. Research indicates that intrinsic motivation plays a major role in the satisfaction of volunteers and subsequently in their decision to continue to volunteer for an organisation in the future (Reeser et al 2005; Bang & Ross 2009). However, this does not continue to the opposite end of the spectrum as there is no indication that a lack of fulfilment of a volunteers' motivating factors will lead to a decision not to volunteer for an organisation in the future (Kai 2012; Giannoulakis, Wang & Felver 2015). It must, however, be recognised that the majority of these studies and others which have investigated volunteer satisfaction have focused their research on event volunteers and not continuous, longer term volunteers.

Literature in the field of volunteerism has largely focused on the motivations of the volunteers primarily within large scale events ranging from the Olympics (Moreno, Moragas & Paniagua 1999; Reeser, Berg, Rhea & Willick 2005), Marathons (Strigas & Jackson 2003) Ski Championships (Williams, Dossa & Thompkins 1995) and the commonwealth Games (Downward & Ralston 2006). However, the major gap highlighted here is that none of these events include athletes with disabilities and more specifically, with intellectual disabilities. It is therefore imperative that research such as that of Khoo and Englehorn (2011) who specifically investigated the motivations of volunteers at a National Special Olympics Event, is further developed. They found that the main reasons for volunteering were primarily of an

altruistic nature as the participants wanted to do something worthwhile, help make the event a success, give something back to the community and to help create a better society. This coincides with the findings of Farrell et al. (1998) and Twynname et al. (2002) who both studied single sport events.

#### **1.4.4 Cultural Variations within motivations to volunteer**

Whilst the research outlined so far in this chapter has looked at the demographics for those who volunteer and their motivations for doing so, research looking at cultural variations of volunteers is extremely underrepresented in this area. Additionally, to date there does not appear to be a succinct review of the literature that does exist in various countries to determine any cultural differences. Those studies that do consider culture and volunteering focus primarily on volunteering rates and demographics (Aydinli et al. 2016), however fail to account for or report on volunteer characteristics or structural variations of volunteer organisations. It has been common place in many fields of sociological research to investigate cultural variations, however, within the area of volunteerism, and in particular the motives of volunteers, there are very few cross-cultural comparative studies (Khoo & Engelhorn; 2011). Whilst motivation to volunteer studies have been conducted in several countries, these generally use different populations and different questions as well as taking place across different contexts thus meaning the results are not directly comparable and cannot be assessed for any cultural variations (Hustinx et al. 2010). This section will therefore attempt to provide an overview of the current body of literature.

It has been previously outlined that volunteering will occur for a myriad of reasons from the more altruistic reasons such as helping others and religious beliefs to the more utilitarian based motives of enhancing CVs and career prospects and the social motives of social pressure and enhancing social networks (Cappellarri & Turati; 2004). It is also known that volunteers are a diverse group of people from various backgrounds, cultures, religions, gender etc and as such, these are likely to affect levels of motivation and behaviour (Alexander, Kim & Kim, 2015). Two of the largest scale cross-cultural studies of motivation to volunteer (Handy et al, 2010; Hustinx et al 2010) used a sample of university students. Whilst this can give a good indication of potential cultural variations, one must consider that university students are quite a niche group which may impact their motives to volunteer. For example, United States based research suggests that students who volunteer are more likely to be viewed on favourably by potential employers who may use their volunteering experiences to make inferences on their skills and abilities thus potentially leading to better



career prospects and high salaries for these students (Prouteau & Wolff 2006; Katz & Rosenberg 2005; Ziemek 2006). Spence (1973) first recognised this within the labour market as signalling theory when a volunteer displays “*unobservable, yet desirable characteristics*” (Hustinx et al, 2010 pg 357) over other candidates to a potential employer: altruism, co-operative, more sociable, leadership and self-confidence. Within the UK and Ireland, students are encouraged to complete volunteering hours to gain awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh or the Pope John Paul awards. Whilst these are not compulsory, they are encouraged to help support and enhance university applications and with volunteering being a mandatory part of the award it may be argued that this removes the ‘voluntary’ aspect of the act as it may be deemed to be coerced by others. As students only make up a sub section of volunteers worldwide, one may postulate that a large number of volunteers are not in the position of enhancing their CV’s or seeking employment for a variety of reasons; currently employed, retired or caring for dependents thus making inferences from this research intangible. Additionally, Sax (2004) found that university students were more likely to engage solely in episodic rather than long term volunteering compared to the general adult population (27% to 23.4%), again providing another indicator of their intentions to build their CV. However, as previously stated, it is important to consider their findings within the body of literature.

Using a sample of 9,482 students from twelve countries, Handy et al (2010) looked at the volunteering behaviours and patterns and found some interesting variations across the twelve countries. Whilst India and China showed the highest rate of students who volunteered; 86.2% and 84.5% respectively, they also showed the highest rates of episodic volunteering and the lowest average time spent volunteering per month; less than two hours. Canadian, Belgian and American students had a high rate of volunteering; 79.7%, 71.4% and 78.8% respectively, whilst also showing a high intensity of volunteering with an average of 15.58 hours per month amongst Canadian students, 15.74 hours by the Belgian students and 11.26 hours per month by the American students. These figures perhaps suggest a significant cultural difference across students from a Western culture and those from an Asian culture.

Interestingly, Handy et al (2010) did find that résumé or CV building was not the most significant motivational dimension amongst students with altruistic motivations proving to be the most positive predictor of volunteering behaviours with those scoring highest in the résumé building motives reporting less frequent and less intense volunteering, a number of potential reasons were used to explain this. Handy et al (2010) postulate that this can, in

part, be explained by Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's (1991) theory that motivation to volunteer is a complex area with many motives being interrelated and therefore that résumé building alone is not sufficient for volunteering to occur. This was consistent across all twelve countries and therefore does not appear to have impacted the motivations to volunteer within this population group. It was also suggested that within society, volunteering is traditionally seen as an altruistic act and this may have caused some of the participants to under emphasize their desire to enhance their CV to appear more socially desirable.

Culturally, whilst differences amongst countries were found in relation to frequency and intensity of volunteering, the authors found surprising similarities in relation to utilitarian motives to volunteer. For example, whilst utilitarianism in this context is accepted as a norm in countries such as the USA and Canada, countries who are greatly influenced by them i.e. China and India; with many students seeking to study in the US, utilitarian motives to volunteer also scored highly. However, it did also score highly in countries where it is not traditionally seen as a societal norm; Belgium, the Netherlands and Israel. Overall perhaps this suggests a far greater complexity of factors when looking at cultural variations of motivations to volunteer and that one factor or dimension alone is not sufficient to predict or explain motivation to volunteer within a particular country or culture. Diverse cultures within countries have a myriad of factors which can impact on the motives to volunteer.

One methodological flaw of this study highlights that only volunteering activities that occurred in the preceding twelve months were investigated and therefore students who previously volunteered but now no longer do so were not included in those statistics. It is therefore proposed that the research within this thesis should seek to investigate the volunteering history of participants to fully understand the current patterns of active volunteers. Additionally, this study used a questionnaire compiled for use within this study specifically which therefore means that no validation of the Likert scale has been completed thus impacting the comparability with other studies that have looked at the cultural impacts or variation of volunteering and motivation to volunteer.

Another study (Hustinx et al, 2010) hypothesized that Social Origins Theory helped predict volunteering behaviours and patterns within a country suggesting that a country with a more liberal regime classified by low levels of governmental spending on social welfare require a high level of services provided by non-profit organisations who traditionally rely heavily on volunteers. At the other end of the spectrum of Social Origins Theory (Salamon & Anheier, 1998), a social democratic regime has a high level of governmental spending on social

welfare and therefore have a lower need for non-profit organisations and the services they provide. Salamon and Sokolowski (2001) posit that based on this theory, due to the governmental spending within a country, the structure of the volunteering process will indeed also vary. However, despite finding evidence contrary to this within Scandinavian countries who have a small non-profit sector yet have strong rates of volunteering relative to this, they still *“expect the non-profit regime model to help explain cross-country variation in the amount of volunteering”* (pg353). Additionally, they postulated that motivation to volunteer will also be impacted by the social regime and will therefore vary between countries. Within a European context, the level of social spending varies significantly. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), social spending includes all expenditures and spending on areas such as housing, disability or sickness, unemployment or the elderly. To allow direct comparison, expenditure is expressed as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Of the countries to be included within the context of this thesis, large variations in social spending exist; Greece has the highest with 27% of GDP, United Kingdom 21.5% GDP and Ireland with the lowest at 16.1% GDP (OECD, 2016). Based on Social Origins Theory, this would posit that Greece places less priority and need on non-profit organisations and the services they provide.

As Hustinx et al. (2010) also used a sample of 5,794 students from six countries, it is not surprising that they found strong support for Signalling Theory given some evidence suggesting that. Cross country differences were found on the résumé building motivation to volunteer, however the altruistic motivation was found to be consistently high across all countries. It is suggested that this in some part masks variations across countries in all other motives as well as the governmental and social regimes. This again provides support for the need for research that considers the complexity of volunteering which can be extremely multi-faceted, particularly when a cross-national perspective is considered.

The cultural research outlined thus far focuses primarily on students and the labour market. It is therefore also vital for the purpose of this thesis to consider research focusing on sports volunteers. Studies within the sports sector have indicated that volunteers are becoming less attached to particular organisations and that any attachments to organisations are lasting for shorter periods of time (Wollebaek & Selle, 2002; Wollebaek, Skirstad & Hanstad, 2012). Furthermore, research has indicated that this has occurred in different countries including Belgium where an increase in reflexive volunteering was found (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003) and Denmark where a decrease in the idealisation of organisations was found (Ibsen & Seippel, 2010) amongst many others.

Wollebaek, Skirstad and Hanstad (2012) studied the motives of 800 volunteers at a Nordic Ski event using a statement based Likert scale to indicate the motives of the volunteers. The motives that are more intrinsic in their nature; fun, helping others and meeting new people were rated as more important than any extrinsic motives; free equipment and clothing, recognition and increasing your CV. However, a 2016 report on the motivations of sports volunteers in England (Nichols et al. 2016) stated having a child involved in a sports club as one of the key motivators for volunteering in a club.

Extensive literature searches for the purposes of this review returned only one cross-cultural study of motivations to volunteer in sports volunteers. Khoo, Surujlal and Engelhorn (2011) looked at volunteers (n = 742) at Paralympiad and Special Olympics events in Malaysia, the United States and South Africa. Using the Sports Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS), they found that Malaysian volunteers expressed higher levels of extrinsic motivators like gaining experience and self-improvement as opposed to the South African and American volunteers who primarily stated reasons such as helping to make the event successful and positively contributing to the community. This study shows that cultural variations exist in relation to volunteers within disability sports. However, it focuses solely on volunteers at events rather than also considering the more long term, regular volunteers. Additionally, it did not include any European countries, therefore further research is required to assess any cultural differences within a European culture.

Overall, whilst it is clear to see that some research has taken place to date and that some cultural variations exist, there is a succinct lack of evidence to allow scholars to fully ascertain what variations exist which may be able to provide a new level of knowledge to organisations in relation to the strategies they use to recruit and retain their volunteers. Furthermore, the current body of literature does not discuss the possibility of the term 'culture' referring to a particular organisation as opposed to a country. Some multinational organisations such as Special Olympics and other social movements have large, worldwide followings and it may be possible to postulate that this may act in a similar manner to a culture or sub demographic of a population. Could this potentially lead to a variation between people within that particular sub culture and the general population or other sub cultures or organisations?

#### **1.4.5 Measurement of Volunteerism**

Throughout the literature, many researchers have discussed the motivation that drives volunteers to do what they do. As a result, there is an abundance of research which lists several of the motives to volunteer amongst their respective participant groups and

organisations. However, there has been little empirical evidence used to test if and how these motives can be categorised. Cnaan and Goldberg – Glen (1991) suggest that the evidence continues to question whether a model of motivation to volunteer (MTV) should be single category, two-category or perhaps a more complex multi category model. Indeed, they have also questioned whether or not a model is relevant only to specific populations' i.e. human services volunteers or sports volunteers.

A comprehensive review of literature was undertaken by Cnaan & Goldberg – Glen (1991) to combine this research and develop a measurement of MTV based on the motives throughout the literature. 28 Items were found to be the most prevalent with prevalence being measured as the item appearing in a minimum of five of the studies reviewed. These 28 items were presented to participants using a 5-point Likert scale and was based solely on their original MTV as opposed to their motivation to continue to volunteer. A potential issue with this is the retrospective way in which participants must look at their original MTV and the possibility that they will confuse this with their motivation to continue to volunteer. Findings of this study suggest a uni-dimensional model of MTV as opposed to a two category or three category model primarily as they found individuals will choose to volunteer to fulfil a number of motivations simultaneously including altruistic and egotistic motivations. The two and three category models suggest the fulfilment of one of these forming the main contributory factors for volunteering. The main implication of this is that organisations focusing on retention of volunteers must focus on altruistic, egotistic and material motives of the volunteer together as opposed to encountering each category individually.

*"Volunteers act not from a single motive or category of motives but from a combination of motives that can be described overall as a rewarding experience"*

(Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen 1991; pg 281)

Overall, the results of this study and the loading within one particular factor led to Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen reducing the scale to a 22 item uni-dimensional factor (Farrell, Johnston & Twynam, 1998).

This scale has provided the basis for the development of other scales such as the Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS, Farrell, Johnston & Twynam, 1998). From 137 respondents to their adapted 28 item scale, Farrell et al. (1998) found four components from their data; purposive, solidary, external traditions and commitments. The first two components; purposive and solidary fit with those categories found by Caldwell & Andereck (1994). External traditions is based primarily on extrinsic motivation statements on the scale

and was ranked low on importance along with the expectations to volunteer from peers, family etc that are categorised within the commitments dimension.

Farrell et al. (1998) indicate from their initial study that further research is required in other sports and events to enhance the evaluation of the effectiveness of the SEVMS. Further studies have been conducted by Johnston et al. (2000) and Grammatikopoulos, Koustelios & Tsigilis (2006) and whilst the latter study provided “adequate construct validity” (pg 287) for the scale, the earlier study by Johnston et al. (2000) found that a three-factor model emerged with purposive and solidary factors remaining but that external traditions and commitment could be combined to form one factor. They explained this by suggesting that the differences in the nature of the event had an impact on the findings. Grammatikopoulos et al. (2006) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on the SEVMS used by both Farrell et al. (1998) and Johnston et al. (2000) as a means of measuring the validity of the scale and concluded that a model featuring the four specific factors; purposive, solidary, external traditions and commitment with an overarching general factor of volunteer motivation was justified as being embedded in the original uni-dimensional factor proposed by Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen (1991). It was also proposed that “the general factor of the SEVMS may represent a common method variance” (pg 301).

The Coach Motivation Questionnaire (CMQ) developed by McLean, Mallet & Newcombe (2012) was devised to address the niche area of volunteers coaching in sport. The focus of scales to date had been for use with volunteers at major sporting events despite the importance of long term volunteering within the sports sector. The CMQ utilised a seven point Likert scale to investigate the 6 sub dimensions of the SDT continuum. A series of studies assessed the psychometric properties of the questionnaire including a confirmatory factor analysis, test-retest reliability and also a confirmation of the factor structure. A strong level of internal consistency was found ( $\alpha = .61$  to  $.85$ ) indicating support for the use of the CMQ within a coaching population. Further studies (da Silva et al., 2018; Zepp et al., 2016) have applied the CMQ to populations across different European countries and have translated it into Portuguese and German, also finding strong levels of internal consistency suggesting wider use of the survey should be considered. As well as cross culturally, the survey has been tested across a range of sports, coaching level; head coach versus assistant coach, gender, level of athlete and financial remuneration; paid staff versus volunteer (Pope & Hall, 2014). However, none of the studies tested the questionnaire on a population of coaches and volunteers within a disability sports organisation, therefore, it is important to continue research within this field to assess if motives for volunteering across sub

populations are similar. This will provide researchers, and practitioners within the field of volunteer recruitment with evidence of how to better their strategic development plans for volunteer recruitment and retention.

One major issue with the scales used to date is that there is no validation for their use on volunteers within the disability sector; either physical or intellectual disabilities. Additionally, there is relatively little concerning the study of volunteers using qualitative methods therefore within the context of this thesis, the opinions of volunteers will be looked at through the use of qualitative questions in addition to quantitative, Likert scale questionnaires. Furthermore, as previously discussed, validated scales exist primarily for the measurement of motivation to volunteer amongst sports events volunteers thus meaning the key focus is on more episodic as opposed to long term volunteering. It is therefore vital to continue to develop further measures which may assist in the explanation of volunteering across a broader spectrum of scenarios. Many organisations rely on long term volunteers for their continued development and additionally must justify all expenditure to funding bodies and consequently, having higher rates of long term volunteering allows for less time and resources to be directed towards recruitment on a continuous basis.

## 1.5 Retention

The issue of retention of volunteers within sporting organisations is of paramount importance, not only for the consistency and quality of their program delivery but it helps eradicate the need for continual recruitment which leads to an inefficient running of the program. Kim, Chelladurai & Trail (2007) have suggested that managerial efforts within voluntary organisations need to focus on the retention of current volunteers before focusing on their recruitment strategies. Volunteer retention was found to be one of the major issues facing community-based organisations in a study by Auld & Cuskelly (2001). With organisations such as the Australian Sports Commission and Sports Coach UK reporting declines in the number of coaches (Rundle-Thiele & Auld 2009), it is becoming more and more pertinent that research delves deeper into the reasons for this decline rather than simply looking at the facts and figures. Therefore, one element of this research will look not only at the reasons for inactivity of Special Olympics volunteers, but also their reasons for no longer volunteering for other organisations.

A substantial number of studies have looked at the reasons given for volunteer coaches decisions to withdraw their services. The main reason cited was that of burnout, as found by Price & Weiss (2000), Kelley, Eklund, & Ritter – Taylor (1999) and Pease, Zapalac & Lee (2003).

This in itself highlights the pressures placed on volunteers who often combine the pressures of full time employment, family life and volunteering and the stress of coping with these factors which may be a possible cause of burnout. Furthermore, a lack of support and training as well as emotional overload (Guinan et al. 1991) and emotional depletion and experiencing a lack of personal achievement (Yan & Tang, 2003) have been found to be contributing factors to volunteer burnout. A lack of enjoyment and challenge has been found to be an important reason for dropout amongst volunteer coaches by Raedeke, Warren & Granzky (2002) who's use of a sports-based commitment model suggests that the issue of social constraints is an important factor and is rated highly by active coaches compared to their non-active counterparts. Issues which can be linked to both burnout and social constraints are those of lack of time and a lack of work- life balance (Pease, Zaplac & Lee 2003; The National Coaching Foundation, 2009). Most of the reasons listed thus far primarily represent intrinsically motivated reasons for the non-continuation of a volunteering role. Research has also found reasons which could be defined as extrinsic factors such as administrative issues (Rundle-Thiele & Auld 2009) and a lack of opportunities for professional development (Sparks, 2003) and hindrances to volunteering activities (Veludo-de-Oliveira, Pallister & Foxall, 2015) such as transportation, access to facilities and a lack of flexibility of volunteering hours. However, volunteers level of empathy and altruism or their volunteering beliefs did not cause variations to their adherence to a long term volunteering program.

It has been noted that effectively retaining and potentially rewarding volunteers will increase the likelihood of the cohort remaining committed to the organisation and that it is this level of commitment that is required to continue to provide a quality service (Kim, Patrice & Rodriguez, 2008). Green and Chalip (2004) suggest that volunteer commitment is *“an evolving process that begins with expectations and that is carried forward by the nature of experiences that are obtained along the way”* (Pg.52). This can perhaps be explained by an individual deciding to volunteer at an event for an organisation with the plan that it is a 'one off' experience, however, this can then often lead to a bigger involvement and more regular commitment to the organisation due to the positive experience gained from the initial event.

Throughout the literature there are several examples of models pertaining to the commitment levels of volunteers. Park & Kim (2013) suggest that a new hierarchical model be developed by combining the component elements of two of these; Kohlberg's (1969) model of moral development and the model of organisational commitment proposed by Allen & Meyer (1990) which consisted of three separate components.



The hierarchical model proposed by Park & Kim (2013) consists of 5 stages; primitive commitment, continuous commitment, external commitment, normative commitment and affective commitment. Motivation to continue to volunteer within this model ranges from the impact of receiving an award or avoiding punishment (primitive commitment) to the level of support or identification with an organisation that a person experiences (affective commitment).

In relation to volunteer motivation and in particular to Ryan & Deci's (2000) Self Determination Theory, this five-stage model of organisational commitment proposes that affective commitment is closely related to intrinsic motivation whilst the remaining four levels of commitment primarily involve elements of extrinsic motivation. Research by Villacorta, Koestner & Lokes (2003) provides evidence to suggest that intrinsic motivation and affective commitment are predictors of sustained voluntary behaviours of an individual towards an organisation, therefore, highlighting the need for organisations to strive towards this level of commitment from their volunteers.

As has been shown throughout, volunteerism is a complex issue and this model recognises this by showing it as a fluid model where individuals may fluctuate between stages at various time points. For example, someone who originally volunteered for the purposes of enhancing their CV as mandated by their school i.e. primitive commitment, may move further up the hierarchical ladder to continuance commitment as they develop a higher level of autonomy with the organisation (Pauline, 2011). However, the debate still exists over whether primitive commitment constitutes a voluntary act if the individual has been coerced or mandated to take part in the voluntary activity.

In proposing this new model of volunteer organisational commitment, Park & Kim (2013) have combined elements of Kohlberg's stages of moral development, Kelman's (1958) processes of social influence in addition to integrating concepts of Ryan & Deci's (2000) Self Determination Theory. Although no research has taken place to date to specifically validate this model or indeed have any methods of validation been proposed, it may be possible to suggest that this model may in the future prove to be one of the more comprehensive models of volunteer behaviour and commitment. Although this view must obviously be viewed with caution due to the current lack of evidence to back it up. Additionally, the combination of a number of models and theories provides additional support for suggestions made earlier that volunteering is a complicated issue both in terms of definition, motivations and behaviours.

## 1.6 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, issues in defining and measuring volunteerism have been discussed, however, it is pertinent to highlight that despite the attempts of numerous researchers, this is a field that lacks clarity. What can be agreed is that the motivation of volunteers vary between sectors, demographics and, in some cases, cultures. Research must be continued in order to assist organisations and policy makers in gaining a better comprehension of their volunteers to aid the recruitment and retention for the development of their program. The sport sector has become extremely reliant on volunteers and cannot function in its current capacity without maintaining current levels as a minimum standard. The current economic and health situations globally put pressure on the sports sector, and consequently the volunteers within it to provide opportunities for participation in sports and physical activity. The burden placed on volunteers further extends to the governmental policies within respective jurisdictions and the reduction in public expenditure caused by the economic situations already mentioned (Nichols et al. 2014). One such program, Parkrun, highlights the potential effectiveness of such programs which has grown to over 2 million registered participants in over 1500 location in 20 countries (Parkrun 2018). According to Wiltshire and Stevinson (2018), this area and Parkrun in particular, is vindicated not only due to the socioeconomic barriers to participation it breaks down, but also due to it being run primarily by volunteers. Therefore, leading from this example, what other organisations within the sports industry can inform key stakeholders reliant on volunteers and how can this research further impact current knowledge and policy?

## Chapter 2: Disability

### 2.1 Introduction

When considering the field of disability and disability sports it is important to understand the development and changes that have emerged to the theoretical viewpoints surrounding disability. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the changing perspectives of society towards people with disabilities. By establishing this change, the impact of greater participation in society by people with disabilities may be discussed. This can therefore impact the perceived and actual barriers faced by people with a disability both in society and indeed concerning their opportunities to participate in sport. It is also commonly accepted that people with disabilities have an increased level of health requirements with research suggesting that exercise can play an important role in decreasing such negative health implications. Sports participation opportunities for people with disabilities have improved along with the shift in perspective of society; however, parity and equality of opportunity with people without disabilities has not been achieved. Sporting organisations and those specifically for people with disabilities are becoming increasingly reliant on volunteers to provide these opportunities and thus volunteers can have a very positive impact on the health and lives of people with disabilities. Therefore, this chapter will provide the background to disability sports before the importance of volunteers to the sports sector and the utilization of volunteers within disability sports organisations is discussed in the next chapter, not least as there is a distinct lack of research within academic literature which combines volunteerism and disability sport.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO; 2011) over 1 billion people have a disability. This equates to approximately 15% of the world's population. Amongst adults with a disability 110 – 190 million are classified as having significant functional impairments or difficulties. This can range from minor impairments which require minimal additional medical and health support or care to more severe difficulties which require large amounts of additional care. Despite the additional health requirements, which could of course benefit from an increase in sports or exercise opportunities, there are still a lack of these available. This chapter aims to outline the history of disability research as well as the barriers people with disabilities face; both societal and physical. It will also discuss the history of disability sport, the opportunities that exist and the growth of these opportunities as well as looking at the beginnings of discussions on the cultural relationship between sport and disability.

## 2.2 Defining Disability

Disability is an extremely complex concept that is both difficult to define and classify. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognise this and also underline the fact that disability is *“dynamic, multidimensional and contested”* (WHO, 2011 pg 3).

Additionally, The Equality Act (2010) in the UK defines a person as having a disability *“if the person has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on (the) person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”* (pg4).

Disability may be viewed as an overarching term used to describe a number of categories including physical, intellectual, sensory and mental illness encompassing Spinal Cord Injuries, Acquired Brain Injuries, Fragile X Syndrome, Down Syndrome, Prader-Willi Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Visual or Hearing Impairment, Bipolar Disorder or Depression. Each disability provides a unique set of challenges to the person, their health and their opportunities to participate in society, thus adding to the complexities and issues with defining and categorizing disability.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities highlights the shift in attitude to people with a disability and recognises disability as more of a social construct arising from the interaction between the person with a specific impairment or range of impairments and the barriers they face within society such as physical or environmental barriers; access to transport or buildings and barriers created by the attitudes of others (Madans, Loeb & Altman, 2011). The convention aids the conceptualization of disability established by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), which will be discussed further in this chapter.

Despite these definitions within legislation, over the course of history many areas have looked at disability and attempted to define it from many different perspectives. Whilst understanding and acceptance within society has evolved exponentially, reviewing older literature in this area will provide researchers with a greater depth of understanding of the field as a whole and associated historical developments, which have led to an abundance of approaches and definitions. These highlight the inequality experienced by people with disabilities and how societal and medical opinions have developed to begin to understand the capabilities of people with disabilities and the role they can play in society.

### 2.2.1 The philanthropic approach

Historically, the philanthropic definition is one of the first definitions of disability and focuses on the perception of the individual with a disability as one requiring sympathy or charity, as disability itself is framed as a human tragedy (McColl & Bickenbach, 1998). People with disabilities were traditionally viewed as victims who required the assistance of others. Philanthropy is viewed as the act of giving to a charitable cause, an act which may take the form of goods or services provision, money or time and this act is generally considered as something that spans an extended period of time.

Whilst somewhat defunct as an approach to disability, it can still be seen as being adopted by charities and organisations seeking to ‘pull on the heartstrings’ of the general public and prospective sponsors. The philanthropic approach seeks to empower individuals to help those with disabilities through moral obligation although this should be on a strictly voluntary basis. Due to the reliance on voluntary and charitable behaviour, this approach to defining disability is influenced by demands on the individuals such as their economic climate and it may also in part help explain an individual’s desire or motive to volunteer. Despite being one of the earliest approaches to disability, as previously mentioned, the philanthropic approach has withstood developments in both research, technology and medical knowledge as it relies primarily on that innate human nature to seek to help those who are viewed within society as having greater needs.

### 2.2.2 The biomedical approach

The biomedical model focuses on illness and therefore treats disability the same by suggesting we must understand the background of the condition before we can understand the disability. Schlaff (1993) defines disability as a “medical phenomenon, residing entirely within the individual, which can be reliably described and measured” (McColl & Bickenbach, 1998: 5) thus implying that individual or cultural variations or differences do not impact on disabilities.

Within the biomedical approach, it is the role of a health care professional to diagnose the disability and suggest an appropriate therapeutic treatment or intervention best suited to the individual. However, this in itself can lead to difficulties as decisions by the health care professional will be based solely on the abnormalities within the persons’ body without considering the external factors such as the daily activities of the individual, thus impacting on the appropriateness of the intervention and indeed whether or not the disability can be cured as opposed to being permanent.

McColl & Bickenbach (1998) suggest that the primary implication of this approach is a functioning health care system that is capable of meeting the needs of people with disabilities. However, a health care system will primarily focus on the medical needs of the person and will not provide for the many non-medical, often complex needs of an individual with a disability such as their social needs, their employment needs etc. One potential issue with this is the increased pressure on the health care systems within a particular country. For example, in the UK, the National Health Service provides free care to all citizens, in Ireland, a partly privatised service provides free health care to those in receipt of disability benefits for medical purposes. The Greek health care system has been described as one of “*the most privatised health care systems among EU countries*” (Siskou et al., 2008: Pg 282) which constitutes a Greek paradox considering the overarching public system in Greece. The biomedical definition depersonalises each individual with a disability and focuses on the disease or disability and not the person. This therefore suggests that another approach must also be considered.

### 2.2.3 The sociological definition

Sociological approaches by their very nature focus on the behaviours within society and its cultures but also in terms of societal norms. This also applies to the sociological approach to defining disability. Disability can be defined as a “deviation from the social norms of the acceptable levels of activity performance” (McColl & Bickenbach, 1998: 7). Society places certain expectations on people with disabilities, many of which are based on assumptions regarding the abilities and capabilities of those individuals.

However, these assumptions cause people with disabilities to be stigmatised as abnormal and therefore, to many people, they are viewed as inferior and that adaptations and concessions in society need to be made for them. One major issue caused by this approach is that practitioner’s attempt to have those with disabilities conform to societal norms rather than focusing on adapting the standards to match the needs and abilities of the individuals. Due to this, divisions in society are often made with people being categorised by their disability, with society creating a disability due to the interaction between an individual with an impairment and their environment.

### 2.2.4 The economic definition

There are certain implications both on individuals and on society as a whole in terms of economics. Certain disabilities require physical adaptations and resources to enable individuals to participate in society. Additionally, in some cases, people with disabilities are

unable to work and contribute to society. This lower earning potential coupled with an increased outlay in terms of resources or care that they require leads to an overall economic burden or deficit, which must then be met through benefits or welfare payments.

One major implication of this view point is the possibility of putting pressure on the individual with a disability to try to contribute even when this is all but impossible. It may also lead to feelings of worthlessness and depression as some people with disabilities can feel like a burden on their families, carers or society. It is important to consider that this approach, as with many of the others, are not simply standalone approaches. The heightened feelings of worthlessness & depression that can be caused by poor economic situations, may be positively or negatively impacted upon by factors such as societal factors. For example, whilst a strong social network may provide support to those who need it, a lack of social support can increase feelings of depression and loneliness and further isolate the individual, an issue that is often seen as a societal barrier of inclusion for individuals with a disability.

### 2.2.5 The socio-political definition

Hahn (1984) suggests that this approach focuses on the interface that both the individual and the environment exist within, including both the physical and social environments. This means that these worlds cannot be considered individually but how they interlink and affect each other must be investigated to be better understood.

Unlike the other approaches, this definition looks at the disability and the impact of it from the viewpoint of the person with it. This can be viewed as a definition of disability by people with disabilities for the purposes of furthering their cause of political activism.

Whilst these approaches focus on defining the area of disability in relation to each of their respective research fields, it is important to consider a definition that sums up the key points such as that of the World Health Organisation (WHO) which suggests that disability is

*“not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers”* (WHO n.d.a).

This definition outlines the need to consider health, social and environmental factors when considering the area of disability. Overall therefore it is evident to see that whilst several of these definitions and approaches can be considered outdated on their own, they are still

relevant in determining the definitions of disability used by the foremost organisation in this field; the WHO, in informing research and practice within the health field. The models of disability to be outlined below have been influenced in part by the historical definitions and approach to disability and how these are applied in practice within the theoretical frameworks developed.

## 2.3 Models of Disability

The plethora of approaches that have been used to seek to define disability highlight the complexity of the field. This complexity further extends into the academic literature, study and development of models of disability which seek to outline how disability is portrayed and viewed within certain contexts.

The area of disability has been found to emerge in academic literature from approximately the 1960s onwards (Barnes & Mercer, 2010). Throughout the subsequent period the approach to disability has shifted from the traditional medical perspective to the development of a range of other models including the social model and biopsychosocial models of disabilities. These changes have occurred in part due to the large number of national and international law that has been passed in the last 20 years. This has highlighted a transformation of the understanding of disability to a social issue as opposed to the traditional medical viewpoint (Vanhala, 2015). Previous to this, historical studies of disabilities have been largely discredited for their lack of empirical grounding as well as their tendencies to contain

*“examples of cruel and extraordinary attitudes and practices”* (Barnes & Mercer, 2010: 15)

### 2.3.1 The Medical Model of Disability

The Medical Model of disability, similar to that of the biomedical approach, focuses on the preconceived notion that disability is solely a medical problem that can only be diagnosed by a Health Care Professional. It converges on the argument of normal versus abnormal and suggests that a disability is a deviation from the norm resulting in limited functioning with this viewed as causing a deficiency (Bingham et al, 2013; Palmer & Harley, 2012). The normality versus abnormality debate is primarily a normative one, as Roush and Sharby (2011) outline, it is a version focused on a comparison with what a ‘normal’ person can do



and the lack of being able to do this classifies someone as being disabled. The model fails to account for or acknowledge the role of societal and environmental factors in creating barriers for the full inclusion of people with disabilities (Martin, 2013). Furthermore, Brittain (2016) argues that with The Medical Model, the dominant identifying feature of an individual with a disability is indeed their disability. The 'problems' or difficulties faced by individuals with a disability are *"independent of the wider socio-cultural, physical and political environments"* (Brittain 2016; pg55) but are instead the result of their impairment regardless of whether their impairment is physical or intellectual.

Whilst the debate in literature has often focused on the divide between the medical and social models of disability, and how they sit on opposite ends of a spectrum, Shakespeare (2004) posits that they are not mutually exclusive. This has been evidenced within stigma research with parents of children with disabilities utilizing either a medical or social model approach depending on the challenges they are facing at that time (Manago, Davis & Goar, 2017). However, one issue with the medical model is that due to the diagnosis and treatment path of someone with a disability being determined solely by a medical professional, the views or wishes of the individual or the parents, in the case of children, are not taken into consideration (Humpage, 2007). It is important to consider the wider implications of this as the categorisation and labelling of an individual can lead to greater stigmatization of the person with a disability thus limiting the opportunities in communities and societies as a whole (Haeghele & Hodge, 2016; Barton, 2009). This furthers Mitras' (2006) argument that the language used within the medical model; limitations, deficits, have a negative influence on the perceptions of society on people with disability and their abilities (Brittain, 2004).

### 2.3.2 The Social Model of Disability

Within research and society as a whole, there has been a definite paradigm shift from the medical model to the contrast of the social model. However, despite the shift, debates still exist in determining the language associated with the model (Barney, 2012). One potential reason for this is that the social model of disability does not refer simply to one model as its development happened individually within different societies. In order to fully understand how disability is viewed, the origins of the model need to be discussed. Within the context of the social model, disability is viewed as a limitation resulting from an impairment with the limitation generally referring to an individual's ability to participate in their local community (Forhan, 2009). Mitra (2006) outlines nine different forms of the social model however large similarities do exist in relation to the concept and definitions of disability.

The origins of the Social Constructionist version from the United States can be traced back and linked to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Frum (2000) discusses how the concepts of discrimination and segregation in relation to racism can be applied to the field of disability. Hahn (1986) suggests that the term disability stems from society's failure to adapt to the needs of those with disabilities as opposed to the individual's ability to adapt to the society in which they live. The subsequent body of work challenges the medicalised 'professional' diagnosis of disability and its primary characterisation of disability as a functional limitation and attempts to shift the focus more towards the social environment in which the disability exists (Owens 2015; Olkin 2009; Davis 2010; Albrecht & Devlieger 2000; Hahn 1986).

One of the major protagonists of this shift in viewpoints was Paul Longmore who felt so disillusioned with the treatment of people with disabilities by the US government and the lack of opportunities afforded to them, that he burnt his book on the steps of a US federal building in Los Angeles in 1988. Part of this argument put forward within the social model is that *"constructing solutions should not be directed at the individual but rather at society"* (Haegele & Hodge, 2016; pg197).

The UK social model of disability is criticised as not fitting the traditional criteria of a model as there is a lack of a definition within it and also that it contains only two components: oppression and disability (Altman, 2001). Additionally, there is no indication of the potential relationships between the individual with a disability and the environment in which they exist and therefore does not meet the definition of a model as proposed by Lave & Gardner (1993) (Owens; 2015).

The UK model originated in 1975 through discussions and a subsequent declaration by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) and the Disability Alliance (Forhan; 2009). The aim of this model was to encourage participation by people with disabilities in their own affairs. The basis of this is that disability is the result of society creating a dependency and with government departments who are more concerned with the environment than with the individual with the disability (UPIAS & Disability Alliance, 1975).

Primarily developed as a result of the welfare state, the Nordic social relative model began in the 1960s and directly rejects the contrasts between illness and health that is proposed through the medical model (Owens; 2015). The Nordic model is considered to be the closest to an actual model as it

*“proposes concepts and relationships between the individual and their environment and some mechanism of exchange or interaction” (Owens, 2015: 388)*

Owens (2015) suggests that the Nordic model focuses on the existence of disability on a continuum ranging from the environment to the individual. Where we see an interaction between the impairment and the perceived disability along this continuum whilst still viewing people with a disability as being incapable of taking part in their community and ‘playing’ the same social roles in the same manner as their non-disabled counterparts (Berg; 2004). This differs greatly from the UK social model, which has a distinct separation between impairment and disability.

Despite the obvious improvements in the treatment and perceptions of people with disabilities associated with the social model of disability, it does face criticism due to its lack of acknowledgement of aspects of the medical model in that an impairment may form an essential part of the lived experiences of the individual and this impairment may be controllable or treatable through medical interventions but instead attempts to separate these completely (Palmer & Harley, 2012; Bingham et al, 2013).

Fitzgerald (2006) has also criticised the social model as it does not account for variations and individual differences of disabilities as well as forms of oppression experienced. According to Haegele and Hodge (2016) the social model therefore lacks the ability to separate the experiences of individuals with disabilities as discrimination and prejudice on the basis of gender, race etc. can act independently to that of disability.

### 2.3.3 Biopsychosocial model of disability

As criticisms of both the medical model and social models of disabilities came to the fore, a model was required to address the void that was consequently created. As previously discussed, the medical model is criticised for its lack of consideration of social and environmental factors whereas the social model has been criticised for not lending itself to empirical research or having strands which can be put into practice, which Bickenbach et al. (1999) describe as it being ‘non-operationalizable’. Imrie (1997) argues that the perspective of the social model alone does not suffice. Simple changes to the physical environment such as improved access to buildings and transport are not sufficient enough to dispel the values and stereotypes held within society regarding people with disabilities.

The biopsychosocial model aims to provide a more comprehensive viewpoint of disability to assist in the understanding of disease and health (Engel; 1977). The model was used as a

basis for the development of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and recognises the complex relationships and interactions between the biological, social and psychological factors and according to Tøssebro (2004), the model, is primarily supported by those who view disability not as a constant but as an entity manifested by the situational factors of the individual. This model has become one of the main tools used within health services to assess an individual and their needs when making a diagnosis of a disability or a health condition however this has not yet been established for all health conditions such as Parkinson's Disease (Gibson; 2017). The key element of the bio-psycho-social model is the understanding that disability and the impairments resulting from that disability are not solely created by the social context they are viewed within (Bickenbach 1990; Gibson, 2017).

#### 2.3.4 Social Relational Model

The social relational model (Thomas, 1999) views disability as the experience found due to an impairment. Unlike some of the earlier models and perspectives, the social relational model recognises that multiple impairments can exist at the one time e.g. physical, social and environmental impairments (Martin, 2013). Similar to the biopsychosocial model, it recognises the complexity of disability and thus the importance of encompassing both the social and medical model factors. This change in viewpoint represents a repositioning of the ontological stand point of disability to better represent how the interactions and relationships between people construct the differences experienced (Sang, Richards & Marks, 2016) with the construction of these differences and the social relationships causing the oppression and marginalisation of people with impairments (Goodley, 2013). The relevance of the Social Relational Model within disability sports has the potential to be used to aid participation by allowing practitioners to conceptualise the lived experiences of the person with a disability (Haslett, Fitzpatrick & Breslin, 2017).

The model outlines four social contexts where disability as an experience can arise; physical impairment, impairment effects, societal barriers and disability (Figure 2.1). Whilst the physical impairment focuses solely on a reduction in physical functioning, the impairment effects considers the perceived biological and societal constraints, which reduce function. These focus on the reduction at a micro level as opposed to the macro level barriers of the cultural and structural constructions of disability. The final level of the model; disability, refers to the potential social oppressions which may be experienced in addition to the impairment of the individual. This therefore answers some of the criticisms of the social

model in terms of its lack of recognition of other oppressions such as gender, race and sexual orientation.

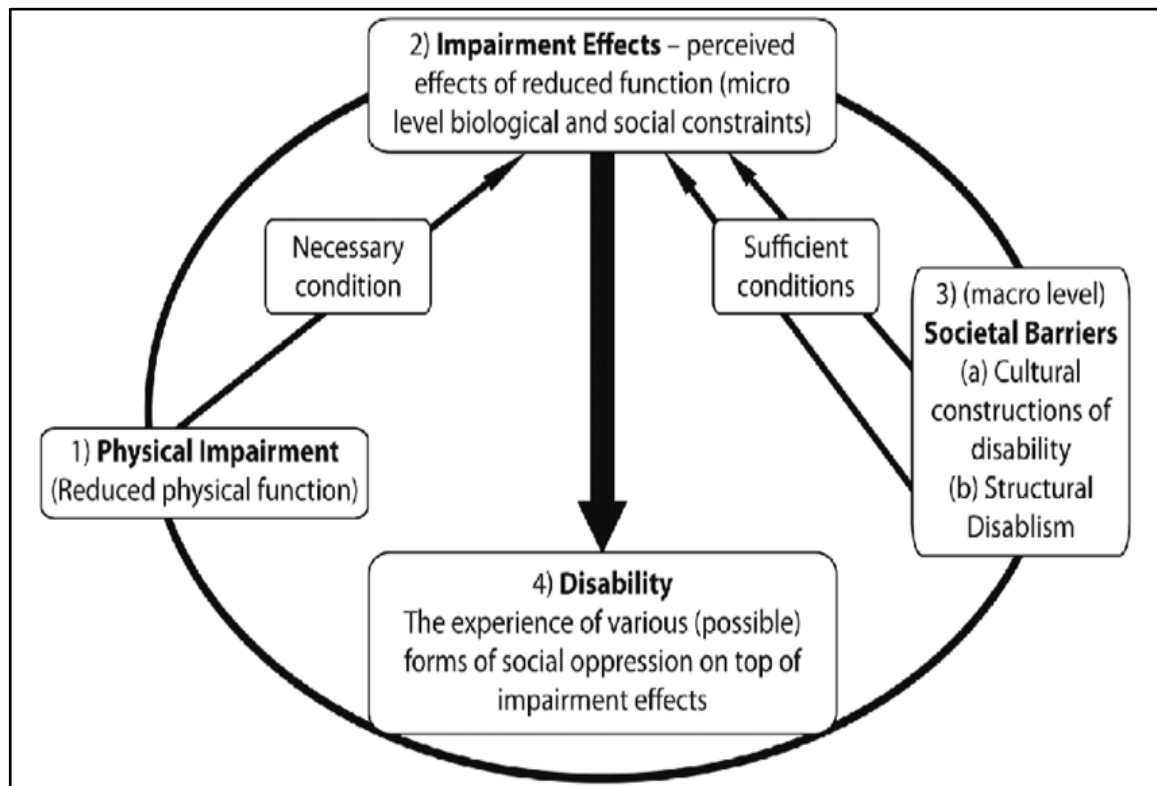


Figure 2.1: Social Relational Model adapted from Reindal (2008)

## 2.4 Classification of disability

As opinions and research into disability have evolved, so too have the systems used to classify them. The World Health Organisation (WHO) adopted the International Classification of Impairments Disabilities and Handicap (ICIDH) in 1976 (Chapireau & Colvez; 1998) which was outlined as a conceptual framework to describe three key implications of disease; impairment, disability and handicap. This manual highlights the complexity of the relationship between these three elements. The reprint of the WHO report in 1993 outlined this relationship by suggesting that whilst impairment is directly concerned with the structure or function of the organ or limb itself, disability refers to a specific task or activity that is expected of the individual person or bodily organ. Finally, the handicap is the disadvantage that results from the limits placed on the individual or organ by the impairment or disability. Despite this relationship, the complexity of this is further deepened through the

fact that this sequence is not always followed as one of the elements may be missing (Chapireau & Colvez; 1998).

The strands outlined are key indicators that highlight the strong grounding of the ICIDH within the social model of disability, however, despite its many uses, it has faced equally as many criticisms. Bickenbach et al. (1999) suggest that the language used within the document leads to some ambiguity in that it suggests that it is solely the disability that causes the disadvantage as opposed to its intention of showing the handicap as the disadvantage that results from the impairment or disability. This has led to the misinterpretation of a handicap as being a complex disability by researchers such as Orgogozo (1994). Bickenbach et al. (1999) further argues that despite the ICIDH defining 'handicap' as a social construct that places individuals at a social disadvantage, it repeatedly discusses it using terminology which indicates that *"it is a classification of limitations of people's abilities"* (Bickenbach et al. 1999; 1175). This lack of acknowledgement of social barriers or their roles within the disadvantaging of an individual with a disability can lead to the conclusion that it may not be the most suitable tool for assessing a disability within the context of the social model of disability.

The ICIDH focuses primarily on physical conditions and also on adults with disabilities (Simeonsson et al. 2001). When specifically looking at the classification of disability in adolescents. Suris & Blum (1993) suggested a distinct lack of a coherent and co-ordinated international system of classifying disabilities which leads to the inability to draw direct comparisons of the rates of prevalence of disabilities. Furthermore, more recent viewpoints have suggested that the ICIDH exemplifies the biomedical approach as it focuses on the loss of function and restriction of movement. These issues led initially to the revision of the ICIDH, ICIDH-2 which incorporated elements of mental impairments but also childhood disabilities. Despite this revision, the ICIDH-2 continued to receive many of the same criticisms and therefore further revision, or a new classification system was required (Peterson, 2005) and was followed up by the publication of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (WHO; 2001). Quinn et al. (2012) describes the ICF as *"a taxonomy that describes health in terms of functioning and a conceptual framework for understanding functioning"* (pg:168). In addition to the revisions and development of the ICF by the WHO, the ICF was also incorporated into the 'standard rules on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities' by the United Nations (UN; 1993). Not only is the ICF a conceptual framework as outlined by Quinn et al. (2012) and Escorpizo & Bemis-Dougherty (2015), it is also a system of classification which outlines *"a hierarchal list of*

*categories or 'items' that can describe and further specify the different ICF components"* (pg 201).

Similar to the ICIDH, the ICF was comprised of three key constructs, however, to address some of the main criticisms of the ICIDH, the terminology of the ICF was changed to help remove any ambiguity and to better highlight the relationship between the constructs. Impairment remains as the first construct and is concerned with the function and structure of organs or bodies. The disability construct of the ICIDH is replaced with activity limitation to better reflect what the disability construct was attempting to outline. Finally, the third construct of the ICIDH; handicap, is replaced with the term participation restriction as this outlines how an individual with a disability may be unable to participate in certain activities due to their disability (Quinn et al. 2012).

The conceptual framework constructed to represent the ICF has been based on the biopsychosocial model of disability which recognises elements of societal factors, environmental factors and individual personal factors, however, it does lack medical factors outlined by the biomedical model and this is potentially an area which requires further research and evaluation (Bruyère, Van Looy & Peterson; 2005). Additionally, criticism of the ICF outlines that it is quite vague in how it distinguishes the causality of the relationships between the three constructs (Imrie; 2004).

In relation to the theoretical underpinning of the ICF, research suggests that an integrated approach is the most appropriate. Dixon et al (2008) constructed and tested a model which featured constructs from both the ICF and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). They concluded that an integrated model better explained the area of disability. This was further tested and supported by the work of Quinn et al (2012) who then also suggested that biopsychosocial interventions could be used to reduce disability. It was found that regardless of the physical limits that had been determined by an impairment, it is perceived behaviour control which determines the activities the individual will actually undertake or what activities they perceive themselves to be capable of completing. Furthermore, the use of the biopsychosocial model through the constructs of the ICF has been supported as a universal framework for classifying disability by Foran (2009) who found evidence for its use in classifying disabilities that are deemed to be related to obesity such as cardiovascular disease, Type II diabetes and cancer. Duggan et al. (2008) identified a need to further elaborate on the construct of the ICF that incorporates personal factors. Previously, this was very much a user defined area with areas such as psychological characteristics, behaviour

and demographics, however Duggan et al (2008) research found that more of an emphasis should be placed on *“biography, self-understanding, stress appraisal and coping strategies as major categories for organising and analysing narrative data”* (pg. 988).

As previously mentioned, these classification structures indicate the development of research within this area, however, further research is required to provide a greater understanding of the causality and relationships between the constructs. Whilst the ICF is the primary system used for assessing and diagnosing disabilities and health conditions, it is important to consider that there are forms of disabilities that are more hidden and can be extremely complicated to diagnose and classify. The classification of learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities can fall into this bracket with both the International Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders (ICD-10) (WHO; 1992) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) (APA; 2013) being the two primary systems used by health care systems world-wide today. Both the ICD-10 and the DSM-IV classify learning disabilities primarily as impaired intelligence with an IQ of 70 or below. Additionally, in order for a learning disability to be diagnosed, the diagnosis must take place during the developmental phase of childhood. This differentiates a learning disability from an intellectual impairment such as a brain injury that has been acquired during adulthood.

The assessment through the ICD-10 takes place through a series of standardised tests based not only on the functional capabilities of the individual but also on an established set of cultural norms that have been developed within the country of use. One important aspect of the diagnosis and classification of an intellectual disability is that it does not always ‘fit the mould’ and therefore solely using a standardised system of criteria for the purposes of diagnosis is not effective for all individuals. Health service professionals should be aware of these individual differences that, in some cases, may keep them off the official classification. Lindsey (2000) highlights the importance of correctly diagnosing an intellectual disability as a failure to do this may have a negative impact on their treatment and experiences within mental health services. However, the ICD-11 was released in June 2018 to include updated scientific content and research and to improve the usability as this had been one criticism of the use of the ICD-10 in practice (WHO, 2018).

Rioux (1996) suggested that when used inappropriately, classification systems can potentially be used to marginalise and act as a form of discrimination against people with a disability. Whilst in many cases it is paramount for someone to be classified with a disability



in order to receive the assistance and benefits etc that they require, the potential discrimination that this classification may lead to an under reporting of disabilities.

It can also be viewed that the improper use or indeed over use of the classification system can lead to an increased level of labelling and stigmatisation. Link & Phelan (2001) suggest that the use of labels which highlight a person's differences are paramount to the levels of stigmatisation that the person will experience. Scior, Connolly & Williams (2013) did also find that the negative connotations of labelling were lessened amongst those with higher levels of knowledge and understanding of intellectual disabilities in their sample of over 1,200 participants. This potentially indicates a need, not only to be cautious when labelling an individual based on a classification but also a need to improve levels of education of the general public as this may lead to a decrease in stigmatisation and discrimination. Furthermore, Badley (1998) suggests that the use of labels can cause confusion in that the view of the individual becomes entangled with the characteristics indicative of that classification. For example, a person in a wheelchair may be viewed as being incapable of participating in sports as opposed to focusing on what the individual is indeed capable of or how sports can be adapted to allow greater participation such as the development of wheelchair basketball, rugby and tennis.

## 2.5 History of disability legislation

To help the reader fully understand how the rights of people with disabilities have changed and therefore how disability sports has developed and progressed, it is important to first look at what legislation has been implemented to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

One of the first pieces of legislation that could be interpreted as assisting people with disabilities was the Elizabethan Poor Law Act (1601) (Thomas & Smith, 2009). This act outlined the entitlement of a section of society known as the 'deserving poor' to assistance from the government in the UK. According to Barnes (1997:17) the act outlined *"the first official recognition of the need for state intervention in the lives of people with perceived impairments"*. Those with disabilities therefore received the same assistance as those deemed unable to work. This law remained relatively unchanged until the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act also known as the 'New' Poor Law. Under this amendment governmental officials sought to encourage 'non-institutional solutions' to caring for people with disabilities (Wright, 2000). The provision of this primarily fell on the families to help alleviate the financial burden of care provision placed on the government as a result of the 1601 Poor

Law. Families were provided with small monetary allowances to assist with caring for their relatives with disabilities (Houston, 1999).

However, there were a number of people who were unable to be cared for by their families and it was at this time that society began to see the construction of asylums for those considered to be mentally ill. Following on from this, it was deemed necessary to develop educational establishments to provide an environment to help those with intellectual disabilities, hearing and sight impairments to cope with society and enable them to live independently (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999).

Whilst these changes were occurring in the UK, the involvement of people with disabilities in society and legislation in the US can be dated back to the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 as one of the founding fathers, Stephen Hopkins, had Cerebral Palsy. Assistance for those with disabilities continued throughout the 1800s with the invention of Braille by Louis Braille in the 1820s and the establishment of the first facility for the criminally insane in the state of New York in 1855.

Despite these early pieces of legislation and developments to assist those with disabilities it wasn't until the 1970s that a number of pieces of legislation were introduced both nationally and internationally. On a national level, the 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act in the UK was passed. The Act outlines that any public building must, where "*Practical and reasonable*" (pg.3), make adjustments to enable access and provide facilities for members of the public with disabilities (Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 s 4 (1)). A similar act, The Architectural Barriers Act was passed in the USA two years previous to this in 1968.

These were followed up on an international stage with the 1975 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons. This resolution provides a framework for member nations on which to build their own national legislations. The resolution outlined the rights of people with disabilities to be respected and treated with dignity and to have access to the same political, social, medical and employment opportunities as those without disabilities.

Over the last few decades, Europe can be seen as an example at how rapid the "*emergence and diffusion of disability rights*" (Vanhala, 2015 pg 832) has been. *Table 2.1* compiled by Vanhala (2015) highlights how many pieces of legislation have been passed within European countries in the last twenty years. Additionally, this was aided, in part, by the ratification of the UN CRPD by the European Union (EU).

<i>Year</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Provision</i>	<i>Disability Specific</i>
1995	United Kingdom	Disability Discrimination Act	Y
1998	Hungary	Equalization Opportunity Law	Y
1998	Ireland	Employment Equality Act	N
1999	Sweden	Law on a ban on discrimination against disabled persons in working life	Y
2000	Cyprus	People with Disabilities Law	Y
2000	Malta	Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act	Y
2002	Germany	Disability Equality Act	Y
2002	Latvia	Labour Protection Law	N
2003	Bulgaria	Law on Integration of Disabled People	Y
2003	Italy	Legislative Decree Providing for Equal Treatment	N
2003	Lithuania	Equal Treatment Law	N
2003	Netherlands	Act on Equal Treatment on Grounds of Disability or Chronic illness	Y
2003	Spain	Law on Equal Opportunities, Non-Discrimination and Universal Accessibility of People with Disability	Y
2004	Finland	Non-discrimination Act	N
2004	Portugal	Disability Act	Y
2004	Slovakia	Antidiscrimination Act	N
2004	Denmark	Act on Prohibition against Discrimination in the Labour Market	N
2005	France	Law for Equal Rights and Opportunities, Participation and Citizenship of Disabled Persons	Y
2005	Greece	Law on the application of the principle of equal treatment regardless of racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation	N
2005	Turkey	Law on Persons with Disabilities	Y
2006	Austria	Federal Act on the Equalization of Persons with Disabilities	Y
2006	Luxembourg	National Labour Act	N
2006	Romania	Law on the protection and promotion of rights of persons with disabilities	Y
2006	Serbia	The Law on Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities	Y
2006	Liechtenstein	The Act on Equality of People with Disabilities	Y
2007	Belgium	Federal General Antidiscrimination Law	N

2008	Croatia	Anti-discrimination Act	N
2008	Estonia	Equal Treatment Act	N
		General Act on Equal Treatment and Protection against	
2009	Czech Republic	Discrimination	N
2009	Norway	Law on Discrimination and Accessibility	Y
		Act on the Implementation of Certain Provisions of the	
2010	Poland	European Union in the Field of Equal Treatment	N
		Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with	
2010	Slovenia	Disabilities Act	Y
2012	FYR Macedonia	Labour Law	N

**Table 2.1.** Adoption of disability equality measures in national legislation, 1995 - 2012 (Vanhala 2015)

## 2.6 Disability & Health

### 2.6.1 Barriers of disability

Within the study of disability and indeed throughout history, it can be seen that people with disabilities have faced and continue to face barriers in multiple areas of life including access to health care, equal opportunities to education and jobs and also opportunities to participate in sport and recreation. There is a diverse range of barriers both on a cultural, environmental and structural scale which prevent people with a disability from fully participating in and immersing themselves in mainstream society. These barriers highlight the continued need of volunteers in sectors such as care provision and sport to assist in the delivery of such opportunities to people with a disability. Deviating from a range of norms creates a stigmatisation of people with disabilities and can leave people prone to discrimination which in turn results in social exclusion from the areas already mentioned (Kinnear et al. 2016).

The increasing amounts of legislation - previously mentioned - which has emerged during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century primarily sought to eradicate the exclusion of people with disabilities. This paradigm shift from exclusion to inclusion has been empowered by changing social contexts as well as taking economic and political factors into consideration (Barnes & Mercer, 2010). This shift however, has led to debates surrounding the redistribution of wealth and support and striking a balance between the 'need' for support and the right to receive something back based on your economic contribution. According to Stone (1985,

cited in Barnes & Mercer, 2010) the medical profession and its diagnosis of disabilities has been a cornerstone of governmental requirements of proving if sickness or disability existed and thus whether or not state aid was appropriate for those who said they could not engage with the labour market. Since the inception of institutions, such as work houses in the UK, an increase in the stigmatisation and marginalisation of those who were institutionalised has been apparent. It may be argued that this period of institutionalisation acted as a catalyst for the traditional, stereotypical viewpoints in society that people with disabilities need to be cared and provided for and are therefore not capable of playing a full role in society. Therefore, it may, in part have contributed to the building of some of the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities today.

### 2.6.2 Employment

Such elements of stigmatisation, as mentioned earlier, have been seen both within the workplace and on its periphery for those attempting to gain access to it. Benoit et al (2013) suggest that despite changes in legislation which has been seen both nationally and internationally *“formidable barriers to meaningful employment”* (pg 971) still exists. In this context, meaningful employment refers to employment in a sector related to their goals and career aspirations and will therefore aid their achievement of these goals. Benoit et al (2015) further suggest that these barriers are caused in part by the stigmatisation that those with disabilities either experience or perceive that they experience in the workforce. Within the labour market, the barriers created by this may be experienced to a greater extent by those with a more visible disability such as being in a wheelchair in contrast to the levels experienced by someone with a more invisible disability such as an intellectual disability.

Workplace accommodation, when implemented effectively and adequately assist with the removal of potential barriers within the workplace and can therefore assist in the maintenance of employment status (Nevala et al, 2015). Critical elements of this include the communication both with the employer and the rehabilitation professionals ensuring the individual employee is fully involved in any communication or discussion regarding the accommodations necessary to allow them to perform their role. Gates (2000) suggests that this social support element from employers, co-workers and statutory bodies is required to break down the barriers for workers with disabilities. This was indeed supported by Nevala et al's (2015) systematic review of the facilitators and barriers of employment with their findings of 11 studies and 1,060 participants showing support, self-advocacy and flexibility to be of paramount importance.

The impact of these barriers is quite evident when looking at employment figures for people with disabilities. Whilst figures vary between countries and also between types of disabilities, the general trends show clear evidence of a lack of opportunities for employment amongst people with disabilities. Larson et al (2011) outlined that 90% of people with psychiatric disabilities in the US are unemployed. Furthermore, despite this, people with disabilities do have a desire to work and believe that employment is an enabler for an improvement in their personal well-being (Lloyd, King & Moore, 2010; Siu, Tsang & Bond, 2010). Investigating employment incentives versus barriers, Larson et al (2011) found incentives to be a better indicator and provide better correlation of employment status than barriers. This however was based on a relatively small sample size of 198 participants. Despite showing a higher rate of employment for people with psychological disabilities (53%), Bowman et al (2015) found that they were the least likely to be employed in their analysis of over 4,000 people who fell into six different disability categories in Sweden. Those who were most likely to be employed were those with hearing loss (89.2%).

Very little research exists in determining if young people with disabilities experience similar barriers or levels of unemployment. Lindsay et al (2015) has started to address this imbalance by looking at the barriers for young people with disabilities in comparison to their peers without disabilities. Whilst both peer groups experienced some similar barriers including a lack of jobs for youth, those with disabilities experienced a number of others including having to rely on others for assistance with transportation and having over protective parents who discouraged them from working. These resulted in less young people with disabilities looking for work with participants concerned that their disability may cause them issues in completing some of the tasks they would be required to do in the workplace.

When assessing unemployment levels amongst people with disabilities it must be noted that National surveys can vary significantly. A comparison of published, official surveys in the UK shows variations in trends of the rate of employment amongst those with disabilities (Baumberg, Jones & Wass, 2015). This potentially highlights the need for further work in developing more robust surveys and more consistent data collection methods.

### 2.6.3 Physical Activity

It has been previously acknowledged that many people with disabilities have increased health needs, many of which can be improved through physical activity. Additionally, physical activity provides many social benefits to many population groups, regardless of disability. Previous research supports the widely acknowledged views that moderate physical activity

and exercise, decreases risk factors associated with many health conditions including coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes (van Schijndel-speet et al. 2014) and therefore it is even more pertinent that population groups at a higher risk of these conditions, such as people with disabilities, and in particular intellectual disabilities, have the opportunities to participate in physical activity. However, despite this, physical activity rates amongst people with disabilities are lower than within the general population with only between 17.5% - 33% of adults with intellectual disabilities meeting the WHO guidelines of 30mins of physical activity a day, 5 days per week (Temple et al. 2006). In comparison, average figures world-wide suggest approximately 31.1% of the population are inactive although an extremely large variation exists in this data ranging from 4.7% in Bangladesh to 71.9% in Malta (Hallal et al. 2012).

Barriers to participation in physical activity have been studied for many years and were included as part of Penders (1987) model based on Social Learning Theory to identify the perceived benefits and barriers to participation in behaviours associated with the promotion of health including physical activity (in Shor & Shalev; 2014). Barriers to participation in physical activity include financial, cognitive and physical limitations as well as a lack of staff or volunteers to help facilitate the activities and support the additional needs of those with disabilities. Furthermore, additional requirements in terms of the transportation of people with disabilities to organised activities provides an additional barrier (Temple & Walkley, 2007; van Schijndel-speet et al, 2014). These barriers can be classified into four categories: personal factors, psychological factors, social and cultural factors and physical environmental factors (van Schijndel-speet et al, 2014).

Despite these perceived barriers, there have been significant developments throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in relation to disability sport and the opportunities for participation for people with a range of disabilities. Whilst these opportunities go some way in addressing the perceived barriers, it is important to realise that without the correct support structures and, in many cases, the assistance of volunteers, these opportunities cannot exist. Therefore, discussion now switches to the provision of disability sport and how this has changed in line with the shift in societal perspective. Literature highlights how the range of opportunities for participation have increased over time, however, it does also show the difficulties faced by organisations to overcome barriers such as access to facilities, funding and changing attitudes.

## 2.7 Disability Sport

DePauw and Gavron (2005) have highlighted the number of terms used to describe disability sports including handicapped sports, adapted sports, deaf sport and wheelchair sports. In some cases, the terminology used simply reflects the type of disability of those who take part in that sport, however, with some people with disabilities taking part in multiple 'types' of disability sports and also in mainstream sports, this is not always the case and it may therefore be more suitable to not differentiate by the classification of the disability but by using the more generic term 'disability sport'.

### 2.7.1 History of disability sport

It can be seen throughout history that people with disabilities have taken part in sports. However, despite this, there were no events organised specifically for people with disabilities until 1888 when a series of events for deaf people and people with hearing impairments was held in Berlin (Thomas & Smith, 2009).

DePauw and Gavron (2005) have suggested that as physical activity often provides the roots of sport and in terms of its use to help disability and physical disorders, it can be traced right back to China around 2700BC where physical activity was used for the prevention of physical disorders as well as for alleviating symptoms. They also suggested that despite a few examples, the emphasis on physical activity remained unchanged until the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries where the introduction of the German and Swedish systems of physical education were seen. These were introduced to aid the viewpoint that the best form of medicine was indeed exercise.

Despite the knowledge throughout history that exercise and physical activity can aid medicine and have positive health implications, there was very little development of sport for these reasons and this extends to the point previously made in that the first organised events for people with a disability did not happen until 1888. Furthering on from this, very little was seen until the first International Silent Games in Paris in 1924. The games were attended by deaf athletes from nine countries who had the support of six National Sports Organisations. In order to maintain a level of development for deaf athletes or athletes with a hearing impairment, the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (CISS) was established immediately following these games. The CISS has continued to develop and has established both the World Winter and World Summer Games for the Deaf. In 1955, they also became one of the few organisations who have official recognition from the



International Olympic Committee with the Games now known as the Deaflympics (Brittain, 2016)

However, one of the most famous developments in the field of disability sport occurred in 1948 when Sir Ludwig Guttmann organised the Stoke Mandeville Games at the hospital of the same name. Universally considered the founding father of the Paralympics, Sir Guttmann was a German neurologist who's main role as the Director of the National Spinal Injuries Unit at the Stoke Mandeville hospital was to care for and organise the rehabilitation of wounded war veterans post World War II (Brittain & Green, 2012). Prior to World War II it was common place for people with spinal cord injuries to die within three years of their injury (Legg et al. 2004). According to Craven (2006 in Brittain, 2016), Guttmann found this surprising, particularly when told he was wasting his time with spinal cord patients as they would be die fairly quickly having suffered from a variety of physical and psychological conditions including kidney failure, sepsis or depression or a combination of them all.

Guttmann recognised both the physical and psychological benefits and values of sport and therefore the introduction of sport as part of the rehabilitation process was one of his core beliefs (Brittain, 2016). According to Brittain (2016) depression was caused due to the feelings of worthlessness and feeling useless caused by the societal attitudes towards those with spinal cord injuries. Guttmann therefore aimed to demonstrate to society that spinal cord injury patients could contribute to society and play a full role in many tasks and activities previously considered as impossible for them. After attempting several sports including darts, snooker and wheelchair netball; which later became wheelchair basketball, Guttmann felt that the sport best suited to the rehabilitation process was Archery. This provided patients with an appropriate level of strengthening of the core muscles required for an upright seated position; shoulders, trunk, arms (Guttmann, 1952). Additionally, it was felt that Archery provided those injured the opportunity to integrate into their local clubs, thus playing a role in breaking down societal barriers and changing perceptions of what they were capable of doing.

The first ever Stoke Mandeville Archery competition took place on July 29<sup>th</sup> 1948; the same day as the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games hosted at Wembley Stadium, London. Over subsequent years, both the number of events and the numbers competing in these events grew, due in no small part to the donation of a specially adapted bus on the day of the original competition. By 1956, athletes from 18 nations were competing in 8 different

sports. Table 2.2 shows the dramatic growth of both the number of competitors and indeed the number of sports they competed in.

Date	Teams	Competitors	Sports	New Sport
Thurs 29 July 1948	2	16	1	Archery
Wed 29 July 1949	6	37	2	Netball'
Wed 27 July 1950	10	61	3	Javelin
Sat 28 July 1951	11	126	4	Snooker
Sat 26 July 1952	2	130	5	Table Tennis
Sat 8 August 1953	6	200	6	Swimming
Sat 31 July 1954	14	250	7	Dartchery
Fri & Sat 29-30 July 1955	18	280	8	Fencing, basketball replaced netball
Fri & Sat 27-28 July 1956	18	300	8	-
Fri & Sat 26-27 July 1957	24	360	9	Shot putt
Thurs - Sat 24-26 July 1958	21	350	10	Throwing the club
Thurs - Sat 23-25 July 1959	20	360	11	Pentathlon

*Table 2.2 A Chronology of the early Stoke Mandeville Games (1948 – 1959) (adapted from Brittain 2016)*

To continue his goal of linking the International Stoke Mandeville Games to the Olympics, Dr Guttman and his organising team secured venues in Rome (1960) and Tokyo (1964) for the hosting of the games in the weeks after these venues hosted the Olympics Games. Due to a variety of reasons including financial issues of host cities, the redevelopment of athlete villages immediately following the Olympic Games and the size to which the International Stoke Mandeville Games had grown; particularly after the decision was taken to combine with the International Sports Organisation for the Disabled (ISOD) Games prior to the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games were not hosted concurrently with the Olympic Games again until 1988 in Seoul, South Korea. They have since continued to do so

and commence approximately 2 weeks after the closing ceremony of the Olympics Games. Brittain (2016) does however highlight one deviation from this in Madrid 1992 where the Paralympic Games of the Intellectually Disabled athletes took place prior to this being added as a category for the Paralympic program for Atlanta 1996. In 1992, the Olympics and Paralympics had been held in Barcelona.

The official ratification by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and subsequent usage of the Paralympic name occurred for the 1988 Seoul Games, however, contrary to popular belief, the name was derived from the greek term 'para' which means 'next to' or 'parallel' to the Olympic Games (Brittain 2016). This is despite evidence linking the informal use of the term 'paralympics' when used in the context of the early Stoke Mandeville Games when staff and the media referred to the Games as the 'Paraplegic Olympics' or 'Paralympics'.

During this whole period of history, there was a plethora of sports organisations forming to help meet the needs of people with a range of disabilities. Such organisations included the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CPISRA) in 1978 and the International Blind Sports Association (ISBA) in 1981. The number of organisations forming appeared to lead to a rather disjointed approach and the decision was made to co-ordinate the response to expanding the opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport with the formation of the International Co-ordinating Committee of the World Sports Organisations (ICC) in 1982.

It is quite clear to see that the ICC had a rocky path over the subsequent years, a fact seen in part by the issues over membership, such as their rejection of a membership request from the Special Olympics, an organisation which, at the time, was already well established and provided an array of sporting opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities (Bailey, 2008).

Bailey (2008) then further outlined the steps taken at the Arnhem Seminar in 1987 to help address the disjointed approach and discord it was causing within the organisation with the series of meetings resulting in a more thorough plan for the structure and future of sports provision for people with disabilities. It was agreed that the organisation would represent an overarching umbrella organisation for sports provision for people with disabilities whilst the International Paralympics Committee (IPC) would focus on elite sporting competition on an international level.

One of the original disability sports organisations is the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf which formed following the First International Silent Games in Paris in 1924 (De Pauw & Gavron, 2005). Since then, the organisation has performed many roles including membership of the ICC and it is now a member of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC); an organisation which will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, and now competes under the term the 'Deaflympics' with Summer and Winter Games occurring the year following the Olympics and Paralympics (De Pauw & Gavron 2005; Brittain 2016).

Disability sports has continued to grow exponentially up to the present both in terms of participation and societal acceptance and recognition. This is evident in the UK where British Paralympians are commanding similar attention to their Olympic counterparts following their achievements in Beijing 2008 and London 2012 (Harvey 2012).

## 2.8 Conclusion

This chapter quite clearly outlines the complexity of the field of disability. Not only in terms of defining it but also in relation to finding a coherent, comprehensive model to attempt to explain it. Historically, people with disabilities have been marginalised, discriminated against and excluded from all elements of society including employment; education, healthcare and physical activity with many barriers still remaining in place despite a myriad of legislation and organisations aimed at providing people with disabilities with equal rights and opportunities afforded to the rest of their communities. The social model of disability has become the most widely used however there is still a recognition of the need for the medical model therefore the social relational model is beginning to become more widely used within the literature, and in particular, the area of sports research.

Physical activity has been shown to have a positive impact in reducing cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, obesity amongst other comorbidity factors and conditions, all of which are more prevalent in individuals with disabilities, despite this, these individuals are more likely to have less opportunities to both receive health care and participate in physical activity. Many organisations exist to aid the participation of people with disabilities the opportunity to play an active role in their communities and to take part in sport and physical activity. These organisations often rely on volunteers to provide their service, however, despite the importance of volunteers within the disability sports sector, this relationship has been somewhat neglected within academic research. It is therefore imperative that we

understand more about this relationship to enable the growth of this sector and the service provision for people with disabilities by volunteers.

## Chapter 3: The Importance of Volunteers

### 3.1 Introduction

It has become apparent throughout the previous chapters that volunteerism is vital to the success of the sports sector and community sports clubs in particular. It is also clear that people with disabilities could benefit greatly from increased opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity, yet these opportunities are not always available. Therefore, volunteers play a role of increased importance within disability sports organisations such as Special Olympics and the International Paralympic Committee.

This chapter therefore will focus on linking these areas by analysing the development of the voluntary sector including how this sector has become more formalised and the role of volunteers within the sports sector. The final sections of the chapter focus on the two primary organisations who provide sporting opportunities to individuals with disabilities and the roles volunteers play within these organisations.

### 3.2 Third Sector Organisations

Many volunteer opportunities fall under the category of Third Sector Organisations (TSO), which are primarily made up of charities and not for profit organisations. Factors such as increased competition for funding as well as the introduction of performance related benefits and management within TSOs have been suggested as a reason behind the decline of volunteer numbers in some industries (Paine, Ockenden & Stuart 2010). Sills (1972) defined a voluntary organisation as

*“an organised group of persons 1. That is formed in order to further some common interest of its members; 2. In which membership is voluntary in the sense that it is neither mandatory nor acquired through birth; and 3. That exists independently of the state”. (p363)*

This definition has been supported by that of Knoke (1986) who added the lack of financial remuneration to our understanding of this definition. The important part of these definitions is that they can be applied to such a broad range of industries both within the sports and recreation industries and the business sector, among others. A Voluntary Sports Organisation (VSO) is a non-profit organisation which, according to its mission statement, is constituted to the provision of sports and physical activity opportunities for the benefit of its members.

The key defining feature is that they are managed by volunteers and operate independently of state governance (Cuskelly, Hoyer & Auld, 2006).

Private, public and third sector organisations can be differentiated by five core elements; ownership, governance, operational priorities, distinctive human resources and distinctive other resources (Billis, 2010). Within the principles of a third sector organisation, ownership is held by members who generally lack formal ownership rights. Governance of a TSO is through private elections held within the TSO itself and operational priorities are derived from the commitment made by the TSO to a distinctive mission statement outlined by its members. It is the fourth element of distinctive human resources within the third sector that make it pertinent to this chapter. A TSO's human resources consists of its members and its volunteer base. Finally, distinctive other resources within a TSO include donations and legacies (Billis, 2010).

Within the area of volunteers who are members of a TSO, there are two main types of organisations. In the sports sector an organisation can be categorised as either integrated or autonomous. An integrated company incorporates their volunteers into their organisation to act as additional members of staff working within set departments such as human resources, administration or coaching. This type of integration primarily takes place within small and medium sized organisations as the process of recruitment and management of the volunteer is reasonably simple (Beech & Chadwick, 2004).

Larger companies tend to adopt a more autonomous approach, one which is more structured and individualised to meet their specific needs. Volunteer job descriptions, interview processes, volunteer officers and many other areas contribute to the formalisation of the volunteer process within these organisations (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). These companies tend to seek volunteers with specific skill sets such as graduate workers for opportunities within key areas. Young graduates can use these more formalised processes to add to their CVs when seeking employment. Whilst some sports organisations, such as Special Olympics could be classed as a larger organisation, due to their worldwide reach and over 1 million registered volunteers, each National Program operates independently in relation to their structure, operations and recruitment of volunteers. It is therefore possible to see elements of both an integrated and autonomous organisation within their structures.

The very definition of a TSO suggests its reliance on volunteers; however, very little research exists concerning how the developments of this sector and its policies have impacted upon the 'work' of the volunteers. The suggestion by Elstob (2006) that volunteers were gradually

being replaced by paid staff was somewhat confirmed by Kane et al's (2009) survey on the UK labour force which shows a 24% increase of people employed within TSOs between 1997 and 2006. The increase in paid staff indicates a move towards a more hybrid organisation incorporating elements of public and private sector organisations although its roots remain firmly implanted in the guiding principles of a TSO, which, according to Billis (1993) forms the basis of the prime sector model of hybridity. According to the citizenship survey (DCLG, 2010), volunteer numbers between the years 2005-2008 had dropped to the levels previously found in 2001.

This is in stark contrast to reports from other TSOs which have seen a threefold increase in their number of volunteers since 1997 (Paine, Ockenden & Stuart, 2010). This is further contradicted by the Office of National Statistics in the UK who reported a rise in the proportion of the population increasing between 2000 and 2015 from 39% to 41% of males and 39% to 42% of females (ONS 2017). Furthermore, a European wide survey on voluntary rates, based on the National Statistics within several European Countries indicates an overall rate of 22% – 23% of those over the age of 15 engaging in voluntary activities (EACEA & DG EAC 2010). When further broken down, the UK has over 40% of adults engaging in voluntary activities, 16.4% in Ireland and 0.3% in Greece. However, it is indicated that the figures for Greece are inaccurate due to the exclusion of those volunteering at large scale events such as the Olympic Games Athens 2004 and those who do not engage in regular voluntary activities. It may therefore be safe to assume that the evidence regarding volunteer numbers is extremely inconclusive and more research is required to fully understand if and how numbers of paid staff are affecting volunteer numbers. The presence of additional numbers of paid staff may lead to greater potential conflict within an organisation as volunteers possess different motives and values as the paid staff (Wicker & Hallman, 2013).

One impact this may be having on volunteers is within the roles they are undertaking. The professionalization of some organisations has led to paid members of staff undertaking more complex, managerial roles with less demanding and less intensive roles being undertaken by volunteers (Geoghegan & Powel, 2006). As the numbers of paid staff increases, volunteers are pushed from the core decision making roles to the peripheral roles which leads to a suppression of opportunities for volunteers and a level of disempowerment (Swierzy, Wicker & Breuer, 2018; Cuskelly, 2004; Wicker & Hallmann, 2013). It may be possible that this lack of engagement and involvement in making important decisions on an organisation and its policies is partly to blame for this exodus of volunteers, described by Cloke, Johnsen & May (2007). Whilst some potential volunteers seek opportunities to be more involved with an



organisation, thus seeking higher levels of autonomy, for others, one that is primarily controlled by paid staff affords them the easier, stress free volunteering role they desire; a chance to give back without the same stresses faced within their place of work or daily lives thus suggesting that the motivations and level of autonomy may be key indicators of intention to continue to volunteer as opposed to the role played by increasing numbers of paid staff. This was supported by Schlesinger and Nagel (2013) within the context of Swiss sports clubs; however, it is in direct contradiction of earlier findings from Kim, Chelladurai and Trail (2007) who indicated that volunteers perceived that they were treated inappropriately by organisational management. These studies however do not report on the proportion of clubs with paid staff or the proportion of paid staff within clubs. Furthermore, there is no quantification of volunteers who were 'pushed out' of core roles therefore it is not possible to determine the significance of any of these findings.

### **3.2.1 Non-profit organisations**

Non-profit organisations make up the majority of third sector organisations such as museums, health organisations, schools, universities and humanitarian aid agencies (Anheier, 2005). Although not a compulsory distinguishing factor, many non-profit organisations rely heavily on the work of a team of volunteers. Salamon and Anheier (1998) suggest that this sector is embedded within the deep-seeded political and social behaviours of a particular country. However, there is a lack of research and understanding as to whether or not cultural differences affect the voluntary element of the not for profit sector. There is a definite need for future research to investigate the cultural differences in volunteerism to enable multinational organisations to implement policies relevant to the volunteers in each of their countries. Doing this will enable organisations to help maximise their volunteer base for the progression of the organisation and potentially assist in developing recruitment and retention policies which are culturally suited to each set of volunteers.

### **3.2.2 Not for profit Sports Organisations**

Not for profit organisations within the sports sector have been found to be of significant importance within the industry and *"should not be underestimated in its ability to deliver health, societal and other outcomes for the community"* (Australian Sports Commission cited in Beech & Chadwick 2004, pg 202). Traditionally, organisations falling under this category rely heavily on volunteers and therefore have volunteer management structures in place to assist in their training and retention. Initially adopting a more volunteer oriented approach, not for profit sports organisations have incorporated a centralised professional structure

with paid staff managing their business supported by volunteers. A primary example of this would be Special Olympics, who have developed into a large, multinational organisation with centralised offices in over 170 countries managed by teams of paid employees. Their sports programmes are predominately run by teams of volunteers with the assistance of the paid staff. The number of paid staff within Special Olympics continues to rise with the last produced figures indicating a world-wide employment figure of 2,153 full time and 4,473 part time staff in 2015; a growth of 58 full time and 338 part time from 2014 (SO Reach Report, 2015).

Parent, Naraine & Hoyer (2018) identified two categories of not for profit sport organisations; 'kitchen table' and 'executive office' sports organisations. A kitchen table organisation refers generally to smaller, less formal organisations which lack official rules of governance or strategic plan. Meetings and discussions will primarily take place in informal settings such as around the 'kitchen table'. On the opposite end of the scale, the executive office organisation is characterised by a centralised professional system co-ordinated and managed by paid staff that make the key decisions. There will also have a set of defined systems in place for the overall management of the organisation and its volunteers.

Whilst numerous studies have estimated the economic and financial contributions of volunteers within the not for profit sports sector (Andreff, 2006; Bowman, 2009, Sport Ireland, 2017), these studies have used several methods of data collection, wage rates and reporting methods (Vos et al. 2011) making it extremely difficult to estimate the true value of the work of volunteers. The Sports Council (1996) in the UK estimated a contribution of 1.5 billion pounds by volunteers in the sports industry in the UK with other countries such as Sweden & Spain reporting the value as percentages of their GDP (Vos et al. 2012). The glaring issue with these figures is that they have now become dated, however, academic research indicating the economic value of volunteers has become scarce with most data being compiled by individual organisations thus leaving no indication on the rigour involved in the collection or reporting of data. The most recent comprehensive report on volunteering (UNV, 2018) estimated it in terms of the number of full time equivalent employees; 109 million, but there is no standardised reporting method of full time salaries with large variations between countries to enable this to be estimated. Also, this data was based on general volunteering and not focused on the sports sector.

The economic significance of the volunteer sector has the potential to vastly influence and benefit the overall economy. For instance, the 2004 Independent sector report in the US

placed an estimated value on volunteer time at \$239.2 billion (Chelladurai, 2006). Furthermore, based on figures previously mentioned, it is possible to estimate that 20% of these volunteers do so within the sport and recreation sector leading to an estimated value of over \$50 billion per annum. Most recently, the Independent Sector suggested that volunteer time is worth \$24.69 per hour in 2017 (Independent Sector, 2017).

The UK estimated value of the voluntary sector was £22.61bn in 2015 (ONS, 2017), a decrease from £22.83bn in 2013. This varies significantly from the estimate of £12.2bn Gross Value Added (GVA) stated in the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). This highlights the need for caution when reporting on and comparing such data. However, despite an incohesive opinion regarding the economic and financial value of the voluntary sector, the figures presented make it safe to assume that the contribution is significant.

### **3.2.3 Formalisation of the Volunteer process**

The professionalization and growth of the TSOs has led somewhat to the formalisation of the volunteering process with around 43% of larger organisations employing a volunteer manager to oversee this process by 2007 (Clark, 2007). This process can include organisations compiling job descriptions for individual volunteer roles with an application and interview process for such roles. To standardise this process, a set of national guidelines and principles were launched in the UK within the Investing in Volunteers Quality Standard 2004 (Paine, Ockenden & Stuart, 2010). Even within registered charities and sporting organisations such as Special Olympics, it has become common practice to adhere to such guidelines with a strict job description, job specification and interview process for all its voluntary management roles such as head coaches, co-ordinators and management team roles for delegations competing in national and international events.

This may be, in part, attributed to the competition for funding in the modern economic climate. Organisations have to focus more on justifying their spending to funders and also show how efficient they can be by utilizing the services of volunteers. The economic crisis in both Greece and Ireland has been well documented in the media, however, the impact that this has potentially had on the volunteer sector in these countries has not been assessed or researched. One may postulate that higher rates of unemployment affords people more free leisure time to volunteer for organisations, however, the opposite impact may occur in which people have less free time to volunteer during an economic crisis as they must work more hours, seek alternative opportunities or spend more time commuting longer distances to work. One interesting consideration for charities and TSOs in relation to funding constraints

and cost efficiency is that of public perception and knowledge due to media reporting that charities do not spend enough of a proportion of their finances on the delivery of their mission but rather on their administration (Bourassa & Stang, 2016).

Theoretically, Hall et al. (2003) proposed a multi-dimensional conceptual framework of organisational capacity which considers the interactions between financial, structural and human resources capacities of an organisation. However, this is relatively unexplored within the context of sports organisations (Swierzy, Wicker & Breuer, 2018).

The human resources capacity refers to both paid staff, formal and informal volunteers, their competencies, motivations and knowledge levels (Doherty, Misener & Cuskelly, 2014). Swierzy, Wicker & Breuer (2018) suggests that the higher the numbers of volunteers in an organisation, the lower the levels of engagement. However, most research in this field focuses on sports clubs rather than multinational organisations. Within the context of this thesis, it may be possible to hypothesise that whilst Special Olympics is a large, multinational organisation with over 1 million volunteers, the smaller national and regional programs and offices allow for greater engagement between the paid staff and the volunteers.

Conflicting evidence exists on the financial capacity dimension and its implications for volunteers. Whilst some research suggests that greater financial security within an organisation leads to issues with volunteer recruitment and retention (Wicker et al., 2014) as volunteers feel there is less need for their services, other researchers (Coates et al., 2014) found that more financially secure sports clubs faced less problems with volunteers.

Finally, the structural capacity of an organisation is its *“ability to deploy the non-financial capital that remains when the people from an organisation have gone home”* (Hall et al., 2003, pg.5). In relation to volunteers and their level of engagement there is no research within this area, however, it does consider the relationships and networks developed with funders, local authorities and other facilities providers such as schools and community halls (Misener & Doherty, 2013). A lack of appropriate facilities and equipment can negatively impact volunteer motivation to continue (Wicker & Breuer, 2013). Consideration must also be given to the makeup of the sports club itself. Hierarchy and specialisation (Struder & von Schnurbein, 2013) within the club and whether they are a single sport or multi-sport club as this may cause a division of resources, funding or equipment thus effecting the volunteers. Special Olympics offers 35 sports and is comprised of both single sport and multi-sport clubs and may therefore have clubs who are impacted by this division and those who are not.

The evidence outlined thus far highlights some of the difficulties faced by organisations classed as TSO's who rely heavily on volunteers to provide a service. To gain a better understanding of organisations who utilize the work and skills of volunteers, it is vital to look at the history, development and structures employed by them. The focus of this chapter therefore switches to the prevalence of volunteers within the sports sector followed by an in-depth discussion of two such organisations. For the purposes of this thesis, two organisations with a focus on the disability sports sector will be discussed; the International Paralympic Committee whose primary focus is elite sports provision, and Special Olympics who's key area of focus is sports competition provision and social inclusion for people with Intellectual Disabilities.

### **3.3 Sports Volunteers Numbers**

Lunn and Layte (2009) found a decrease in volunteer numbers within the sports sector in Ireland, falling from 8.2% of the population in 2007 to just 6.8% in 2009. In contrast, Dalziel (2011) highlighted that 830,000 New Zealanders volunteered within the sports sector in 2007 which equates to 25.3% of the population. In addition to this, through the Sports Club Survey, the Sport and Recreation Alliance (2013) found that in England, more adults volunteered in the sport and recreation sector for at least one hour per week when compared to any other industry, equating to two million people. Taylor et al. (2003) found that whilst those individuals who volunteered represented all age ranges, there were more within the 16-19 and 35-44 age ranges with 8.5% in each. Whilst these categories represented the highest percentage, the lowest was found in the over 65-year olds who represented only 2.9% of the volunteer numbers.

As has been previously mentioned, sporting organisations and the sports sector in general relies heavily on the work of volunteers to function and without these volunteer's services such as grassroots sports and sports for minority populations such as people with disabilities would not exist. Volunteering rates in the UK have risen consistently year on year recently with 41% of men and 42% of women volunteering: an increase from 39% for both between 2000 and 2015 (ONS, 2017), with women spending longer per day volunteering (15.5mins versus 11.3mins for men). However, it must be considered that these figures are based solely on formal volunteering and do not consider informal volunteering which often attracts more female than male volunteers.

The Sport England Active Lives Adult Report 2017 defined active volunteering as having taken part in a voluntary act twice within the previous 12 months and reported 15% of English adults (6.7million) were classed as active volunteers within the sports sector with 60% of these male and 40% female. Variations in the age ranges of volunteers were also reported with 22% aged 16-24, 20% aged 45-54 and 17% aged 65 or over. In comparison, the Irish Sports Monitor Annual Report 2017 (Sport Ireland, 2017) indicates that only 10.8% of the Irish population (aged 16+) volunteer in sport and this has decreased slightly from the findings of the 2015 report (11.4%). A variation in the number of males (12.6%) and females (9.1%) volunteering can be seen. There has been a decline in female volunteers over the same time period which can be seen across all age groups, however, the largest decline is seen within the 35-44 years category. Sports volunteering statistics for Greece have been less accessible with less reports commissioned in country. The 2016 Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe Report (Elmose-Osterlund & Ibsen, 2016) have indicated that only 3% of the Greek population (aged 15+) actively engage in volunteering activities.

### **3.3.1 The Demographics of Sports Volunteers**

Studies conducted looking at the demographics of those who have volunteered within the sport and recreation sector have shown some interesting findings. Individuals over the age of 35 who volunteer are typically more likely to be highly educated and earning a good wage (Lunn & Layte, 2009). In contrast to this, younger volunteers, are more inclined to come from lower income backgrounds. Sport Ireland (2017) reported that those who were employed and had higher incomes were more likely to participate socially in sport; including volunteering. This also applied to education level with those at a higher level more inclined to participate. Whilst further research would be required to establish if there is a link, one possible explanation for this may be that those who are self-employed may possess higher levels of self-determination and self-esteem than those who are unemployed.

Many studies (Berlonghi, 1994; Dalziel, 2011) have found there to be no significant difference in the genders of the volunteers, a finding questioned by Taylor et al. (2003) who found that 67% of its participants were male and 33% were female.

Demographic information obtained at a curling event by Farrell, Johnston & Twynam (1998) indicated that 87% of their respondents had participated in curling at some point with 66% currently participating. This in itself indicates that a strong affiliation with the sport may contribute to an individual's motivation to volunteer.

### 3.4 Volunteers in Disability Sport

As has been discussed throughout earlier chapters, the areas of volunteer research and disability sports research have been lacking. Furthermore, there is an even smaller body of literature which considers an amalgamation of these fields of study.

The development of disability sport has occurred at a rapid pace throughout the twentieth Century and therefore the requirements of volunteers to aid in the delivery has been vital. A key organisation in the delivery and co-ordination of disability sport has been the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) since its current inception on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1989 (Brittain, 2016). Their reliance on the work of volunteers was evident in London 2012 where 70,000 volunteers were recruited across the Olympics and Paralympics with over 20,000 of these involved in the Paralympic Games (IOC, 2012b). The growth of the organisation is evidence of the formalisation and professionalisation of the volunteering process and volunteering organisations as the IPC was originally a fully volunteer led and managed organisation. However, in order to continue its growth and expansion, a full time, professional office was established.

More recently, the primary voluntary role within the IPC is that of events and Games volunteers at major events such as the Games Makers seen in London 2012. In addition to this, as with the majority of sports organisations, the most prevalent volunteering role relating to the IPC is at grassroots level as volunteer coaches and club management roles. However, as most of these are governed by individual sports governing bodies and not directly by the IPC, it is difficult to gain an accurate picture of the scope of the volunteers within the IPC.

It is therefore important to consider any academic literature outlining volunteers' involvement in the Paralympic Games and their motivations. As with general volunteering literature, this is a growing area, however, within the field of disability sport, there is a succinct lack of volunteering research. What little research does exist in reference to volunteering at the Paralympic Games, does so in relation to the field of mega-sports events as opposed to the field of disability sport.

Khoo and Engelhorn (2007) suggest that volunteers are essential for the sustainability of mega sports events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games and that during such events, volunteers may be required to perform a wide variety of roles including catering, media, telecommunications amongst others, in addition to sport specific roles. Their study of 301

volunteers at a Malaysian Paralympiad event found solidary factors such as gaining practical and educational experience to be the highest scoring motives on the Sports Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS) and family tradition scoring lowest. This perhaps fits with the demographics of the volunteers with 97% of them being students. From this, one may posit that career driven motivators were the primary motives as opposed to helping at a disability sport event. These results however, should be considered in terms of their generalisability as the proportion of students volunteering at the event makes it unrepresentative of the general volunteering population.

Additionally, Khoo and Engelhorn (2007) compared their demographics to statistics from the IPC regarding the 2004 Athens Paralympic Games volunteers and the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics (Preuss & Kebernik, 1999). In Nagano, 71.1% of volunteers were female, in comparison to 61.5% in the 2006 Malaysian Paralympiad and 60% at the 2004 Athens Paralympics. This perhaps suggests a significant difference to the body of literature of sports volunteers outlined in chapter one which shows a variation in the gender research which ranges from no significant difference (Dalziel, 2011) to a 67% to 33% male to female breakdown (Taylor et al. 2003).

The findings were also compared to other studies that used the SEVMS (Farrell et al, 1998; Twynam et al, 2003; Strigas & Jackson, 2003). These studies all found that the purposive factor of wanting to make the event a success scored as the most important motivating factor. However, Khoo and Engelhorn (2011) found this to only score as the tenth most important factor.

Reeser et al. (2005) studied polyclinic volunteers at the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Paralympics. They compared the motives of those who volunteered at solely the Olympics, solely the Paralympics and those who volunteered at both and found there to be no difference in the motives of those who volunteered at the Olympics or both events. However, those who volunteered only at the Paralympics scored higher than the other cohorts in the motive of wanting to make the event a success. Whilst this was not a significant difference, it perhaps suggests that further research has the potential to show a difference in the motives of volunteers at a sports event and those at a disability sports event.

A more recent study (Wilks, 2016) looked at volunteering at the London 2012 Paralympic Games from a different perspective; a serious leisure perspective. Using the reflective diaries of 20 volunteers, Wilks investigated the lived experiences of the volunteers. In addition to this perspective, this study is one of very few to utilize qualitative techniques to gain a more



in-depth understanding of the experiences of the volunteers. Wilks (2016) concluded that adopting a serious leisure theoretical framework is suitable for mega sports events volunteers, however there is no distinction made between volunteers at the Paralympics as opposed to those at the Olympics Games.

Overall, it is therefore clear to see that there may be some differences in relation to volunteers at the Paralympics Games in comparison to those in other events, for example, in terms of their motivations. However, one point that is extremely evident is the succinct lack of research specifically looking at volunteering within the IPC, or within disability sporting events in general. Therefore, whilst the IPC as an organisation has developed at an extremely rapid rate, it is important for it to continue to investigate the impact of their volunteers as well as potential strategies to enhance recruitment, retention and the volunteer experience or satisfaction.

It is apparent from this research, volunteer literature within disability sports has a main focus on mega events, however, as has already been alluded to, many volunteers in this field take part in more long-term roles within their National Governing Bodies (NGBs). Therefore, in order to gain an understanding of these volunteers, a more in-depth case study is required, thus, Special Olympics, as a volunteer led organisation for people with an Intellectual Disability will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter and the subsequent subject of the body of work within this thesis.

### **3.5 Special Olympics**

An organisation which solely focuses on athletes and people with learning or intellectual disabilities is Special Olympics. It is a global movement which seeks to improve the lives of and provide sporting opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities by providing all year-round training and competition within 172 countries world-wide as well as international competitions with the World Summer and Winter Games taking place alternatively on a bi-annual basis.

The organisation itself was developed in the 1950s by Eunice Kennedy Shriver initially as a summer camp aimed at providing a social environment for her sister Rosemary and other people with intellectual disabilities, but this rapidly developed with the first Special Olympics International Summer Games taking place in July 1968 in Chicago. According to Devlieger (2010) these camps acted as a *“laboratory from which ideas and practices could grow”* (pg 8) and develop into further programs and opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

This development was evident when the camps had expanded into those first Chicago Games where approximately 1,000 athletes from the US and Canada competed in 3 sports; athletics, swimming and floor hockey.

It was then in 1971 that the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) approved the use of the name 'Olympics' making Special Olympics one of only two organisations authorised to use the Olympics name with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) officially endorsing Special Olympics in 1988. Further developments have continued, such as the introduction of the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) in 1981 aimed at increasing awareness of and raising funds for the non-profit organisation. 2003 saw the first International Summer Games held outside of the USA when they were hosted by Dublin, Ireland. This saw the world's largest sporting event of that year with 5,500 athletes competing.

Special Olympics has continued to expand and develop with there currently being 4,931,754 athletes registered, representing a growth of nearly 20% in the last five years. Additionally, volunteer numbers have grown to 1,156,397; a growth of over 30% (Special Olympics, 2016). These 1 million volunteers can be further broken down into coaches (435,107), youth volunteers (339,394), Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) volunteers (74,376), Health promotion and Health Athlete volunteers (25,820) and a category classed as others (281,700) which encompasses volunteers whose key role involves areas such as fundraising or administrative support (Special Olympics 2016). To allow the number of volunteers to continue to grow, Special Olympics undertook a commitment within their 2011 – 2015 strategy to enhance youth engagement with the goal of having 20% of all volunteers aged 12-25 years. The Special Olympics Reach Report 2016 shows how this goal was greatly exceeded with 339,394 out of the 1,156,397 volunteers (29.35%) aged 12 – 25.

Despite this obvious strong growth within the organisation as a whole, within the remit of the study outlined in this thesis, it is important to consider the context of the Special Olympics Europe Eurasia Region (SOEE) which saw a decline in athlete numbers between 2011- 2015 (Table 3.1); the only region to show this decline over this time period. The most significant decline has taken place between 2014 – 2015 (3.3%), however figures are not available for 2012 or 2013 so it must be considered that this may still represent an overall increase over that time period, however, the region has somewhat recovered with a larger growth of 5.9% in 2015-2016. Furthermore, volunteer numbers have risen steadily from 2011, with the slowest level of growth being found in the year 2015 – 2016. This may in part

be due to some countries conducting an audit of their systems during this period and recategorizing some inactive volunteers as supporters of the organisation.

	Total 2011	Total 2014	Total 2015	Total 2016	% Growth 2011 - 2016	Growth 2015 - 2016	% Growth 2015 - 2016
<b>Athletes</b>	521,489	519,748	485,647	514,142	-1.43%	28,495	5.9%
<b>Volunteers</b>	65,357	70,946	72,820	73,448	11.02%	628	0.9%

*Table 3.1 Athlete and Volunteer numbers for Special Olympics Europe Eurasia (adapted from Special Olympics Reach Report 2015, 2016)*

Special Olympics currently operate their year-round training program and competition schedule on a four year cycle similar to that of both the Olympics and Paralympics culminating in National Games in year three of the cycle and World Summer Games in year four of the cycle with the next games due to take place in Abu Dhabi in March 2019. The World Winter Games also operate on a four year cycle but take place bi-annually alternatively with the Summer Games and were last hosted by Austria in 2017.

A total of 35 individual and team sports are offered across the program; 26 Summer Games, 8 Winter Games and The Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) offered as a development program for athletes with more complex physical needs who cannot compete in the other 34 sports. In addition to the sports program outlined, Special Olympics offer programs aimed at specifically addressing the increased health and social needs of athletes with Intellectual Disabilities; the Healthy Athlete program and the Unified Sports program.

### 3.5.1 Unified Sports

To aid with the promotion of social inclusion for people with Intellectual Disabilities amongst their peers and local communities, the Unified Sports program was officially launched in 1989. According to Hassan et al. (2012) whilst meaningful inclusion within a community is valuable for everyone, particularly for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, those with an Intellectual Disability were traditionally treated as an exiled, problematic group within their society. This highlights the importance of programs such as the Unified Sports program within organisations like Special Olympics as it specifically aims to provide people with Intellectual Disabilities the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way within their communities as well as having a valued social role within their sports team. However, some arguments exist that Special Olympics programs encourage exclusion and segregation by separating athletes with Intellectual Disabilities from mainstream sports (Storey 2008;

McConkey et al, 2013) therefore it may be possible to postulate that the introduction of the Unified Sports program can, in part, address this criticism of Special Olympics as an organisation (Dowling et al. 2012).

Based predominantly around team sports including soccer and basketball, Unified sports affords athletes with and without intellectual disabilities the opportunity to train and play together as equals. Teams are comprised of Special Olympics athletes with a higher level of sporting skills and their playing partners: a term used to describe Special Olympics volunteers without an Intellectual Disability who play an active, physical role in the sport itself. For example, although not officially classified as a Unified Sport, non-intellectually disabled playing partners take part in alternate shot play in golf within Special Olympics competitions on a regular basis as well as competing on local and national platforms as well as occasionally having the opportunity to compete Internationally.

The Unified Sports model works on three levels (*figure 3.2*) with the competitive model, the player development model and the sports recreation model. Aimed primarily at lower ability athletes and those not seeking competition, the Sports Recreation Model requires teams to be made up of at least 25% of players with and 25% without an Intellectual Disability and the other 50% of any mix of with or without a disability. Participation is the focus of this level with non-advancement competitions taking place on a local level only, ensuring the focus remains on inclusion and fun. The Player Development Model takes a step towards full competition. Players are required to be of a similar age regardless of ability. Higher ability team mates undertake the role of mentor to lower ability athletes to aid development of sports specific skills and tactical awareness. Finally, the Competitive Model involves equal numbers of athletes with and without Intellectual Disabilities of similar age and ability. When competing within this level, teams are eligible to take part in advancement competitions at local and national level as well as being eligible to compete at Regional and World Games (Special Olympics, 2018). One major element of the Unified Sports Program is the Unified Champion Schools. This promotes inclusion of young people with an Intellectual Disability into the school environment using sport as the foundation as well as promoting inclusive youth leadership opportunities and a whole school approach to inclusion and engagement.

Unified Sports has now become the fastest growing program within Special Olympics with 226,076 athletes and 320,728 partners involved in the program in 2010-2011 (Special Olympics 2011), 619,254 athletes and 657,311 partners in 2014-2015 (Special Olympics 2015) and 671,821 athletes and 725,898 partners in 2016 (Special Olympics, 2016) showing

a significant increase in both populations with a threefold increase in athlete numbers and more than double the number of partners over a five year period. Additionally, the growth of the program was particularly significant from 2014 to 2015 which saw an overall increase of 422,475 participants (athletes and partners), representing a growth of 49% in one year (Special Olympics 2015). Ninety percent of all Special Olympics programs (more than 200 out of 220) across seven regions now offer Unified Sports.



**Figure 3.2** The Unified Sports Program models of competition (Special Olympics 2012)

These statistics act as a clear indication that the program is proving popular and is attracting and encouraging both athletes and volunteers to become members of Special Olympics. It is therefore no surprise that this has in turn led to a new body of research looking at the effectiveness and benefits of the Unified Sports program. One major element of focus for Special Olympics is that of the psychosocial development of their athletes and the Unified Sports program has been found to have significant benefits for this. Following an eight week Unified Basketball program, Castagno (2001) found significant improvements in Friendship Activity Scale (FAS) scores as well as self-esteem for both athletes and partners. Through this and other studies (Riggen & Ulrich 1993; Rosegard, Pegg & Compton 2001) a variety of

behaviours were investigated using several measurement tools; Adjective Control List (ACL), Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) as well as the FAS previously mentioned. All reported positive results in relation to improvements in social self-perception and lower levels of internalising and externalising. As these studies focused solely on basketball (Riggen & Ulrich 1993; Castagno 2001) and bowling (Rosegard, Pegg & Compton 2001), Ozer et al (2012) expanded this area of research into Unified Soccer. According to Special Olympics (2015), football (soccer) is the most popular Unified Sport in five out of seven regions therefore Ozer et al's (2012) research which showed a decrease in problem behaviours in addition to an increase in FAS scores and social competence shows the benefits of the program in relation to the psychosocial benefits for athletes.

However, despite these documented benefits, McConkey et al (2013) suggest further research is required to enhance some limitations of the program including on how to include more females as well as athletes with lower sporting abilities and greater needs as they are more at risk of social exclusion. They additionally suggested that a more multi-sectoral approach is required to fully address issues of social exclusion and societal involvement than a sports program alone can address.

Throughout sports and health literature, the physical benefits of sports and exercise has been well documented. It has been further documented that people with Intellectual Disabilities are at a greater risk of health related conditions such as obesity (Frey 2004; Graham & Reid 2000), lower cardiovascular fitness (Fernhall et al 2001) and reduced muscular power (Fernhall & Pitello 2000). Baran et al (2013) suggests that whilst the risk of these, and potential subsequent illness and disease, increases over time and throughout adulthood, there is a distinct lack of research within a cohort of young people with Intellectual Disabilities. Baran et al (2013) used a combination of the Brockport Physical Fitness Test (BPFT); developed specifically for use with youths with Intellectual Disabilities, and the Football Sports Skills Assessment (FASA); developed by Special Olympics International to division athletes, to investigate the effectiveness of a Unified Soccer training program on physical fitness and skilled performance. Whilst no significant differences were found on some anthropometric measures such as skinfold and height, overall the eight week training program was found to be effective in increasing fitness levels and the performance of soccer skills amongst youth with and without Intellectual Disabilities in comparison to the non-training control group.

Overall it is therefore clear to see that the Special Olympics Unified Sports program is effective in improving both the physical and psychosocial development of athletes with Intellectual Disabilities. There does however remain a lack of empirical and theoretical research to fully understand the effectiveness of a program which incorporates athletes and their non-disabled playing partners. One thing that can be stated categorically however is the requirement for volunteers within this program and indeed the rest of the organisation to allow Special Olympics to continue to develop at the rate it is developing.

### **3.5.2 Volunteering within Special Olympics**

As an organisation, Special Olympics prides itself on its ability to promote not only inclusion of athletes with intellectual disabilities but also volunteerism and a sense of community.

The 1 million (Special Olympics 2015) Special Olympics volunteers ensure that people with Intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to take part in a variety of sports. Special Olympics provides its volunteers the opportunities to assist in many different roles from coaching, to fundraising to admin support and event managers. In return the volunteers provide Special Olympics with key skills, knowledge and expertise to complete certain tasks (Dorsch, Riemer, Sluth, Paskevich & Chelladurai, 2002).

Organisations such as Special Olympics who run a variety of programs ranging from year-round sports clubs to annual events and indeed events including the World Summer Games which occur every 4 years will need to ensure they are meeting the needs of volunteers in each area. Research has shown that the satisfaction of volunteers at a single sporting event differs from that of those who volunteer at all year-round programs (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Farrell, Johnston & Twynam, 1998).

Long & Goldenberg (2010) have found that many of the volunteers within the Special Olympics organisation are family members with this forming 21.1% of all the attributes given by participants. The next most common attribute was that of wanting social acceptance both for themselves and the athletes (19.9%). This potentially in itself highlights how individuals may volunteer for an organisation as they view their aims and what they do i.e. promote inclusion as being important to their own views and beliefs. It is therefore important for Special Olympics to continue to promote this primary aim as a means of recruiting volunteers. From this, it may also be possible to postulate that by encouraging athletes to remain in the program, not only will the athletes continue to receive the health and social

benefits associated with Special Olympics, but the organisation may also benefit from their family members being retained as volunteers. No research currently exists to determine if a familial relationship impacts volunteer motivation or indeed if the continued participation of an athlete in the program has an impact on the decision of an individual to continue to volunteer long term for Special Olympics.

In addition to the reasons and motivations for an individual to volunteer, Li & Wu (2012) studied Special Olympics volunteers at the National Games in China in 2010 to assess their attitude towards people with Intellectual Disabilities and inclusion. Li & Wu (2012) believed that by better understanding the demographics of their volunteers and indeed their attitudes towards inclusion, the organisation would be better placed to target specific groups of people when recruiting volunteers. They found that only 46.9% of the 386 participants in this study had spoken to a person with intellectual disabilities prior to volunteering at the games. The study also reported that participants had positive attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities; however, considering these participants had chosen to volunteer at the National SO Games, it is important to consider that this may be a biased sample. The researchers have however, indicated that this is a possibility and that a wider scale study would be required to look at attitudes towards inclusion.

Whilst the outlined literature highlights how organisations such as Special Olympics have a positive impact on the attitudes of society towards people with Intellectual Disabilities, there remains to be large gaps in the literature within the organisation. Overall, very little exists in relation to the role that Special Olympics volunteers can play in the continued growth of the program and the subsequent benefits it has on athletes with Intellectual Disabilities.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter it has been apparent that volunteers contribute significantly to the success of organisations within many sectors and are of great benefit to the social capital within their communities and countries. This contribution is vital for the success of the sports sector (Doherty, 1998) as indicated earlier in chapter one. Chapter two also evidenced the increased importance of sport and physical activity to improve long term health conditions such as Cardiovascular Disease and Type 2 Diabetes yet despite this, more at risk populations such as people with disabilities still face barriers and have less opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity. Therefore, the links between the provision of these opportunities and the recruitment and management of volunteers suggest that the disability sports sector would benefit greatly from the work of the volunteers. Despite this, there is a lack of research



in the literature focusing on volunteers within disability sports and the organisations that provide these opportunities.

The work of volunteers permeates throughout the sports industry yet as Peachey et al (2015) outline, the impact of initiatives on stakeholders such as volunteers has been largely ignored. For this reason, further research is required which investigates the volunteers in greater detail as the main area of research to date has focused solely on their motivation. It is vital to understand what attracts them to particular organisations and the autonomy they experience whilst volunteering. It is postulated that this will aid retention rates of volunteers by giving the organisations the knowledge of the requirements of their volunteers thus allowing them to develop their policies and procedures to match the expectations of their volunteers.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

When developing and conducting research, it is imperative that all potential study designs and methodologies are considered to ensure the most appropriate one is chosen. In modern academia, ensuring rigour and quality of research has become fundamental, due in part, to the increasing use of systematic reviews, highlighting any lack of quality within studies on a more regular basis (Pawson, 2006). The current economic culture and the inclination of funding bodies to require or request a more robust auditing of how their money is being used (Shore & Wright, 2000) has increased the importance of utilising the most appropriate methods for the research question under investigation. Research within the broad areas of volunteering, culture and Intellectual Disabilities has been conducted using a variety of methods. However, this chapter aims to provide an overview of the methods commonly used within the more specific remits of this research to develop the most appropriate design. It is therefore the aim of this chapter to discuss the methodologies considered for use by the researcher and the theoretical perspectives involved in these. It will also outline the rationale for conducting this research as well as that for the chosen methodology. Finally, the study design and process will be outlined in detail.

### 4.2 Theoretical Research

Quantitative versus qualitative research has been debated throughout academic literature with the strengths of each being well documented (Bryman, 1985). It is therefore imperative that all such options are thoroughly assessed when designing a research study. The difference between the two is that quantitative research tests a theory whilst qualitative research assumes a theory may be generated following research, or it may also examine a given theoretical perspective. However, it must be highlighted that this does not suggest that one research paradigm is stronger than the other. Both quantitative and qualitative research have strengths and should therefore be assessed and compared during the development of a research strategy. To fully develop a sound methodology for research, there are several questions and

positions of both the research and the paradigm that must be understood. According to Matthews and Ross (2010), it is important to consider both the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin research as these will form its foundations.

An ontological position refers to the philosophical concepts of nature and thus being within the area of research it defines the social reality upon which a theory is based (Gray 2014). Simply put, ontology refers to how we view the world. The two key positions within ontology are objectivism and collectivism. Objectivism implies that external facts are wholly independent of social phenomena and their meanings. The collectivist position outlines that social interaction aids the production of social phenomena and such phenomena are ever changing and in a constant state of revision (Bryman 2012; Gray 2014).

Epistemology questions the ability of the social world to be studied in accordance with the procedures within natural sciences (Gray, 2014). Smith (2010) defines epistemology as *“the knowledge gathering process and the underpinning assumptions that govern the methods of inquiry”* (pg. 8).

Similar to ontology, there are two main epistemological stand points identified in the literature. A positivist doctrine uses natural science and its associated methods in the study of social reality. Yet it is a difficult concept to outline as it is used in a variety of ways by different authors. According to Bryman (2016), positivism is viewed as either a descriptive category or a negative term by some authors, with the descriptive category referring to the philosophical position in which the research findings fall, whereas the negative connotations are used in relation to the data collection methods, which he suggests are viewed by some as *“crude and superficial”* (pg.24). However, interpretivism recognises that there are differences between natural sciences and people and therefore focuses primarily on the study of people, their behaviours and the relationships they form (Ritchie et al. 2014). How this impacts on the proposed methodology has been an area of debate in the literature, with Bryman (1985) summarising that the *“epistemological base leads to a preference for a particular method”* (pg76) based on the appropriateness of the certain methods to certain stand points. Indeed, he used the early work of Trow (1957, cited in Bryman,

1985) to strengthen this viewpoint as Trow suggested that there is no one absolute superior method, as the technique used is dictated by the research question and thus the approach adopted.

### 4.3 Current body of literature

As has been shown throughout the previous three chapters, research within the fields of disability sports and sports volunteerism has grown exponentially over the previous decades. Research such as Dalziel (2011) & Chelladurai (2006) have focused on using quantitative research to study volunteering numbers and the financial and overall economic value of volunteers, whilst several other researchers have used validated scales such as the MTV (Goldberg-Glen 1991) and the SEVMS (Farrell et. al 1998) to assess the motivation of volunteers. However, one criticism of this research is the lack of in-depth assessments of the views and opinions of the volunteers. Qualitative research utilises interviews and focus groups to allow for this more in depth exploration of the area of volunteerism, however, it lacks the standardised, statistical data provided by quantitative questionnaires. Furthermore, there has been a distinct lack of research focusing on volunteers within the disability sports sector, thus leaving the question of whether the same methodologies are valid within this sector and whether volunteers' views and opinions vary based on the sector in which they are volunteering. Validated Likert scales have been a key source of data due to the ease of collection from large numbers of participants.

Research focusing on the broad field of Intellectual or developmental disability has adopted a more varied approach in the use of methodologies as it encapsulates an abundance of areas such as social inclusion, physical activity and health. Within the body of literature, this field of research has often encapsulated a relativist ontological and constructionist epistemological viewpoint.

#### 4.3.1 Quantitative Research

Bryman (2008) suggests that quantitative research plays a deductive role in the testing of theory with the characteristics of being objective, impersonal, reductionist and having a greater likelihood of allowing generalisation to a wider population. Additionally, quantitative research is characterised by its standardisation in relation to data collection and the use of statistical analysis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004)

which also highlights its focus on numerical data. Primary quantitative data collection methods include surveys, scales, exit polls etc. These methods form part of the key strength of quantitative data - the ability to study large numbers of people in a relatively short time frame with statistical analysis providing results which, due to the use of effect size, significance etc, are relatively independent of the research, thus lowering the risk of bias.

However, despite these strengths, it must also be noted that there are clear weaknesses in the use of quantitative research methods. The focus on the testing of hypotheses may lead to confirmation bias as this may cause the researcher to miss the potential generation of new theories or hypotheses (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It must also be considered that quantitative methods do not lend themselves to the assessment of the understanding of both the questions and indeed the context by the participant.

#### 4.3.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is predominantly based around exploratory research that can often be used to conduct more in-depth assessments of views and opinions. However, it is a concept which is quite difficult to define, as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) highlight, it has no distinctive paradigm, methods or practices that are solely associated with qualitative research. Despite these difficulties, several researchers have outlined some of its key characteristics in an attempt to define it, with it being an interpretive approach that can be used to help explore a particular phenomenon from its core (Flick; 2009). Furthermore, the use of qualitative research helps “*make the world visible*” (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; pg3) which incorporates a range of tools to assist in the studying of the meaning of phenomena in its natural setting such as interviews, observations, video or audio recordings, conversations and photographs amongst others.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there are many different approaches to qualitative research, it is also accepted that there are numerous common characteristics associated with this form of research. The aims and objectives of research within a qualitative paradigm are primarily concerned with providing an in-depth understanding of the social world with rich, complex data obtained from a variety of

adaptable methods aimed at eliciting the depth of understanding required around a specific issue (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton-Nicholls & Ormston, 2014). It is then further suggested by Ritchie et al. (2014) that the analysis of qualitative data should maintain an openness to absorb the complex emergent categories and the nuances evoked by the uniqueness of each individual participant. The final key characteristic outlined is the reflexive approach, which must be embraced by the researcher throughout the research process and allows for the influences of researcher and their personal experiences.

Early pioneers of the qualitative research paradigm such as Kant (1781, cited in Ritchie et al, 2014) and Dilthey in the 1860s – 70s adopted an interpretivist conceptual approach who both recognised the importance of understanding the experiences and perceptions of people and the context in which they occur. Since these early researchers, the development and diversification of qualitative research has led to areas including ethnography, phenomenology and ethnomethodology. Ethnographical research requires the immersion of the researcher within the social or cultural setting under investigation for the purposes of observation (Atkinson et al. 2007). As a concept and a methodological approach, phenomenology focuses on the meaning attached to a phenomenon and is used primarily within sociological and philosophical areas of academia and research (Adams & van Manen, 2017). Developed by Garfinkel (1967, cited in Whittle & Wilson, 2015), ethnomethodology is *“the study of the practical methods through which members of a particular social group accomplish social organisation and generate social order”* (Pg 42).

Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) has become one of the most commonly used qualitative methodologies in recent times (Aldiabat & Le Navenec 2011) and aims to aid the production of theories to explain social process. One key concept of this is the use of those who have experienced these processes first hand. However, it must be noted that the expansion and development of grounded theory has led to the argument that it has become more of a broad strategy as opposed to a single theory and thus the term is used more loosely than originally designed (Barbour, 2008).

Research which utilises qualitative methods has many key strengths. They tend to be more fluid and responsive to the condition and situations in context as opposed to the relative rigidity of quantitative data collection methods; however, one must also consider that it generally is quicker and more efficient to use quantitative methods for data collection with qualitative data analysis relatively time consuming (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Grounded theory and phenomenology allow for richer content and thematic analysis within naturalistic contexts, which is not possible through quantitative research methods. Therefore, overall, as previously mentioned, it is important to consider the research question and allow this to guide the use of qualitative methods.

#### **4.3.3 Mixed Methods Research**

Whilst it has been shown that there are many benefits to using either quantitative or qualitative research methods, an increasing number of studies and researchers are utilising a mixed methodology (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Dunning, Williams, Abonyi & Crooks, 2008). This enables researchers to incorporate elements of both types of research including using interviews and focus groups to enhance and supplement the knowledge gained from the statistical analysis made possible by the use of quantitative data with some researchers suggesting that the development of a mixed methods approach has become a third research paradigm in its own right as opposed to a combination of the quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Johnston et al, 2007). This perceived value of mixed methods research has become a more popular area of study. McKim (2017) has found that a deeper understanding of a phenomenon can be produced when a mixed methods approach is adopted due to the rigorous process of using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This has further strengthened findings that the use of a mixed methods approach increases the validity of research as well as the perceived value of the research within literature which leads to a higher average number of citations in comparison to research using a solely quantitative or qualitative approach (Hurmerinta-Pelotmaki & Nummela, 2006; Molina-Azorin, 2011). Despite the strength of mixed methods research, it must also be noted that there are areas for consideration when determining an approach for research. To date, there are very

few studies which have looked at how to assess and evaluate this approach. Key areas to be considered include the evaluation of each individual method used as well as looking at the philosophical assumptions and the strength of the theoretical underpinning of the research (Cresswell & Plano-Clark; 2018). Additionally, a researcher requires skills and training in both quantitative and qualitative methods, something that is not necessarily commonplace within academia, meaning that additional support from researchers in specific areas may be required. This, coupled with additional resources and supplies may increase funding requirements for mixed methods research to be deployed. It is therefore imperative for researchers to fully assess the potential value of this approach when designing their studies.

However, when assessing the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative approaches, researchers risk adding to the debate that Walsh (2011) suggests has created a false dichotomy that forces approaches and methods into one particular camp whilst in reality they may be more fluid. Therefore, adopting a mixed methods approach may open up these fluid methods to be assessed within the current context and not solely using tools of assessment for qualitative or quantitative.

#### 4.4 Data Collection Techniques

The research paradigm chosen to fit a particular research question or study, in part, dictates to the researcher the data collection method to be used and as already discussed, it is vital for the researcher to assess the data collection tools available to her/him in order to effectively and efficiently answer the aims of the study. There are, however, some methods that cross paradigms and do not solely have to fit into the 'box' or classification as being either quantitative or qualitative in nature. Verbal data, in particular, can be collected in many formats ranging along a continuum from unstructured to structured (Gillham, 2011). *Table 4.2* outlines Gillham's proposed continuum, thus highlighting the range of verbal data that can be collected whilst also indicating that verbal data, which resides primarily within the qualitative methodology paradigm, can be collected through a variety of methods. In this context, a structured method of data collection denotes a method where the questions are determined by the researcher.



Unstructured				Structured		
Listening to other peoples conversation; a kind of verbal observation	Using 'natural' conversation to ask research questions	Open-ended' interviews; just a few key open questions e.g. 'elite interviewing'	Semi- structured interviews, i.e. open and closed questions	Recording schedules: in effect verbally administered questionnaires	Semi-structured questionnaires: multiple choice and open questions	Structured questionnaires: simple, specific, close questions

*Table 4.1* The verbal data dimension continuum (Gillham, 2011)

The study conducted for the purposes of this thesis utilizes both questionnaires and interviews, therefore it is important to fully outline these methods of data collection in order to assess their ability to aid the fulfilment of the aims outlined in this research.

#### 4.4.1 Questionnaires

One such method that can cross paradigms with both open and closed ended questions, thus allowing both types of data to be produced, is a questionnaire. Situated on the structured end of Gillham's (2011) approach, questionnaires are designed by the researcher to elicit responses suited to the research question and indeed the paradigm itself. Semi-structured questionnaires can be compiled within one paradigm or be constructed within a mixed methodological approach encompassing both multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. Within this, the multiple-choice questions produce quantitative data for statistical analysis and the open-ended questions producing verbal, qualitative data for narrative or thematic analysis. A structured questionnaire consists solely of simple, closed questions such as 'yes/no' or 'true/false' questions. Van Schaik, Wong & Teo (2015) found that the layout of the questionnaires, particularly for those online, was a key factor in determining their effectiveness with the presentation of one question at a time resulting in a faster completion rate, whilst those presented as a whole form required the participant to focus their attention more, and often led to a higher level of deliberation over their responses.

#### 4.4.2 Online questionnaires

The emergence of online questionnaire survey platforms has led to a new tool in the administration and collection of data with completion of questionnaires now possible on computers, tablets and smart phones (van Schaik et al 2015). Whilst this has proved to be an inexpensive collection tool available for large scale studies it does present challenges such as a low response rate (Loban et al., 2017). Whilst this lower response rate may be regarded as a weakness of online surveys, it is important to consider that this may vary significantly based on the demographics of the participants, with younger generations now more inclined to use electronic devices and therefore may be more likely to respond to online surveys. Additionally, Kohut et al (2012) found that despite lower response rates of online or telephone administered questionnaires, meaningful data can still be collected and it is this depth of qualitative data in particular which may assist in producing robust findings.

Overall, it is therefore clear to see that questionnaires have many strengths and variations in how they are used. Questionnaires provide researchers with a low cost method of data collection from a large sample whilst allowing participants the flexibility of completion at a time and place suitable for them therefore increasing the likelihood of completion. This also provides the participants with anonymity, which has been found to increase the confidence of participants to be open and honest in their responses (Murdoch et al., 2014).

However, it is important to note that there are weaknesses with questionnaires including the inability to follow up for clarity as well as for understanding of questions, literacy levels of participants and indeed for the openness and honesty of responses. Whilst ensuring anonymity can be considered a positive, it also removes the ability of the researcher to follow up on answers provided by participants.

#### 4.4.3 Interviews

Whilst interviews are primarily a qualitative data collection tool, they allow flexibility in their design to provide the opportunity for quantitative data collection through the researcher verbally asking closed questions. Unlike questionnaires, interviews can span the continuum outlined by Gillham (2011) ranging from unstructured, semi-structured and structured approaches. The more structured the interview, the more

quantitative the data produced (Silverman, 2017). Semi-structured and unstructured interviews provide the flexibility to change the direction of the dialogue with the participant in order to remain fluid to match the direction in which their responses dictate (Edwards & Holland, 2013) whilst the researcher also ensures that the focus of the interview is kept on the context in question. One key element to be considered when using interviews for data collection is the skills of the researcher. In order to fully explore a topic and answer the research question, the researcher must combine their question framing and probing of responses with their ability to create a rapport through their personal interactions whilst effectively listening to the responses of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Whilst interviews traditionally have taken place face to face, technological advances have led to interviews now also taking place over telephone as well as online, using web based calling tools such as Skype.

As already discussed, there are three main types of interviews; unstructured, semi-structured and structured. Unstructured interviews allow the participant to express their views surrounding the research question in their own way, often resulting in rich data for analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). On the other end of the continuum, structured interviews follow a common set of questions that will be put to each participant in a set order to help reduce any risk of interviewer bias as different orders, wording or verbal probes may influence the responses provided (Gillham, 2011).

However, semi-structured interviews have become the most common form of interview utilised by researchers. Within this format, a researcher will follow an interview guide which sets out the specific topics to be covered whilst allowing the interview the flexibility to steer the conversation based on how the participant chooses to reply (Bryman, 2016). This also provides the flexibility to change the order in which questions are asked which can therefore avoid repetition if a participant has, knowingly or unknowingly, answered multiple questions in one area of dialogue thus aiding the flow of conversation. Commonly used by social researchers, semi-structured, qualitative interviews are associated with interviews in which the focus is on the experiences, views and behaviours of the participants (Bryman, 2012) and

therefore are primarily used in exploratory, explanatory or evaluation based research (Silverman, 2017).

Thus far, this chapter has discussed the current body of literature in the field of volunteerism, culture and intellectual disability, primarily in relation to the methodologies adopted. During the research design process, it is imperative the theoretical positioning of the research is understood in order to adopt the most appropriate methodological approach. With these considerations now at the forefront, the focus of the chapter switches to the current study with considerations and the methodological design being outlined and discussed in detail.

## 4.5 Aims

The study proposed for the purposes of this thesis aimed to address a number of gaps within the field of volunteerism including volunteers within the disability sports sector in addition to adding to the limited research base investigating volunteerism at a cultural level and the differences that exist amongst cultures. Whilst ‘motivation to volunteer’ studies have been conducted in several countries, there has been no consensus on the most appropriate data collection method to be used, with different samples and questions across different contexts being used, therefore not allowing for comparable results across cultures. This study used the same questionnaire across all three participating countries, thus enabling a direct comparison between cultures to be drawn. Furthermore, to the knowledge of this research, no studies exist which engages the views and opinions of volunteers and staff in relation to the volunteer policies and strategies which may impact the volunteer retention rates within the organisation.

### 4.5.1 Research aims

The overarching aim of this research was to address the gap in research outlined within the rationale and consider any cultural variations which may exist amongst volunteers within Special Olympics National Programs alongside the policy awareness demonstrated by these volunteers. As a result of this overarching aim, the following research objectives were identified:

1. To conduct a cross-cultural analysis of the motives of volunteers

2. To determine the motives of volunteers within Special Olympics
3. To gain an understanding of the volunteers' views of the processes and structures of volunteer management and retention within Special Olympics
4. To determine if the policies surrounding volunteer management vary between cultures and, specifically, National Programs in order to allow for a better understanding as to whether an overarching strategy would be suitable in relation to the management of volunteers within similar third sector organisations
5. To inform policy advisement for Special Olympics in terms of the management processes involved in volunteer recruitment, training and retention
6. To outline lessons to be learned for other volunteer organisations

#### 4.5.2 Philosophical Underpinning

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the use of a mixed methodology can make outlining the ontological and epistemological positioning of research a complicated task. However, with the aim of this study focusing on the beliefs and experiences of the volunteers and how their perceptions will be impacted by these, this study can be placed within a relativist ontological position. Furthermore, the volunteers will base their motivations to remain part of, and beliefs of the organisation on their interactions with the organisation and its stakeholders; staff, other volunteers and the athletes. This therefore places this study within a constructionist epistemological viewpoint.

#### 4.6 Study Design

A mixed methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods was adopted in order to ensure a depth to the research. As stated earlier in this chapter, McKim (2017) proposes that adopting a mixed methods approach to research enables academics to gain a more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon by providing the breadth of knowledge garnered from the large scale data collection possible through quantitative methods. The qualitative data, particularly the follow up interviews allows the researcher to gain the depth of information not facilitated by the quantitative data. Overall, this can provide a more rigorous research process

and aids the full answering of the research questions. The use of a mixed methods approach in this body of work increases the validity of the results due to the comprehensive nature of the data collection proposed. A multi stage approach allowed for the rigorous process outlined.

### *Stage 1*

After identification of the potential participating countries, Special Olympics Europe Eurasia research staff facilitated initial email contact with the Director of each National Program. Each program was provided with a copy of the participant information letter (Appendix A) and an introduction to the study by the researcher. Telephone or skype calls were then arranged with the National Director and/or their relevant staff; volunteer manager or research officer to answer any questions and make arrangements for dissemination of the questionnaire if an agreement to participate is reached. The participating National Programs were Special Olympics Ireland, Special Olympics Great Britain and Special Olympics Hellas. The rationale for the approach of these countries was due to a) the cultural similarities between Great Britain and Ireland and their cultural differences with Greece (Hellas), b) the similar 'age' of the National Programs and c) the variations of having hosted an International Special Olympics event with Greece and Ireland both hosting the World Summer Games and Great Britain not having hosted an International Special Olympics Games. The latter was chosen as the recruitment drive for a Major Sporting event; London 2012 Olympic Games, may have impacted the volunteers' experiences. In order to ensure confidentiality of participants, emails including participant information and a link to the online questionnaire via survey monkey was sent to all volunteers by each Special Olympics National Program.

### *Stage 2*

This involved semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders within each participating National Program in order to assess if the organisations can learn anything from the opinions, beliefs and knowledge of their volunteers. By combining the views of the volunteers and the staff, a more rounded approach can be adopted as volunteers have the benefit of seeing what happens at grassroots level whilst staff

members may be more aware of restrictions such as financial and legal ones, which may make some volunteer suggestions unfeasible. The contact within each National Program was asked to provide a list of staff within the organisation who would have direct involvement with volunteers and may have an understanding of the organisational structure, the roles volunteers currently undertake, and current policies and procedures. It was made clear that this was not an exclusion criterion and a range of staff was the most suitable. They were also asked to provide details of the study to a selection of volunteers with a request to be interviewed.

Prior to the interviews being conducted, preliminary results of stage 1 were analysed and a report compiled for each National Program. A copy of this was provided to each interviewee to allow them to understand the findings to date of the research. This then acted as a basic structure and discussion point of the interview which was built on based on the experience and expertise of the interviewee (Appendix G). Each report focused solely on the analysis of the results and did not include any discussion in order to ensure this did not influence the opinions of the participants.

#### 4.6.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire (Appendix B) was divided into four key sections. Section one focused on collecting demographic information to provide the research and indeed Special Olympics as an organisation, with a more detailed insight into who their volunteers are. Information gathered included age, gender, marital and employment status as well as looking at the sectors and industries their volunteers work in which will allow the organisation to understand the areas of expertise of their volunteers and potentially how they can better utilise this expertise for the benefit of the organisation.

Section two of the questionnaire collected information on the volunteering background or history of the volunteers including the roles they play in Special Olympics, years of involvement and also why they may not currently be involved as an active volunteer. It was also deemed appropriate by the researcher to investigate whether or not Special Olympics volunteers generally also volunteer for other organisations and if so, what sectors do these organisations fall under i.e. sports, health care etc. The rationale for this was to provide a better understanding of how

Special Olympics volunteers 'fit into' the bigger picture of the voluntary sector, thus advising on the generalisability of this study to other organisations. Additionally, this will also provide information on the experience and expertise volunteers may bring with them from other organisations.

Moving forward from the statistical information gathered in sections one and two, section three of the questionnaire focused on the motivation of volunteers. A twenty-two item, seven-point Likert scale inventory on coaching motivation (CMQ, McLean et al 2012) was used to highlight the motives of each individual participant. Many Likert Scales and questionnaires exist to measure motivation of volunteers, and more specifically, within a sporting context including the SEVMS, SVMS and VMS-ISE. However, the issue in relation to this body of work is the primary focus on mega sports events volunteers. Special Olympics encompasses long term volunteers in addition to the more episodic nature of events volunteers. Therefore, a questionnaire which does not exclude either bracket was required. Additionally, the statements used within the CMQ reflect generic statements that are applicable to both sports and non-sport volunteers. The statements focus on determining the motives of the population within the sub categories outlined by Self-Determination Theory.

The word 'coaching' was replaced with the word 'volunteering' in order to make the scale more appropriate to all Special Olympics volunteers and not just those involved in the direct coaching of the athletes. The twenty-two items on the scale are subcategorised into the six categories on the motivation continuum highlighted within Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985); Intrinsic, Integrated, Identified, Introjected, External and Amotivation.

The items changed were:

*"Because coaching is fundamental to who I am"*

*"Because coaching is integral to who I am"*

*"I often think my coaching efforts are a waste of time"*

*"Sometimes I don't know why I coach anymore"*



*“Sometimes I question my desire to continue coaching”*

In each instance, the word coach or coaching was changed to volunteer or volunteering. Special Olympics offers voluntary opportunities across numerous functional areas including administrative, support and medical roles in addition to sports roles. Therefore, the use of the word coaching would eliminate the relevance of these statements for a large number of volunteers thus possibly skewing the data. Furthermore, the changes made were determined as minimal by the researcher that would have no impact on the validity of the survey.

Due to the cross-cultural element of this research, ensuring applicability of the relevant Likert Scale was imperative. The CMQ has been validated in multiple settings and languages. The initial validation studies conducted by McLean, Mallet & Newcombe (2012) have been replicated in Portugal (Da Silva et al, 2018) and Germany (Zepp et al, 2016). This indicates that the CMQ may be used across populations, however, it has yet to be tested within the field of disability sports and more specifically, disability sports volunteers. Therefore, this study will also provide further evidence to the generalisability of the CMQ.

In addition to the Likert scale CMQ, volunteers were asked to answer true or false as to whether or not they started to volunteer because they know or are related to a Special Olympics athlete. By comparing the CMQ results of those who are related to or know an athlete to those volunteers who are not, it may then be possible to outline any differences in the autonomy of volunteers.

Finally, section four of the questionnaire predominantly focused on qualitative, open ended questions looking at the views of the volunteers. Questions were designed to elicit the volunteers' knowledge of how the organisation puts procedures and policies in place in order to ensure volunteers remain involved in the program and why the participants have or have not remained involved as volunteers. Areas covered included experiences of the recruitment process, decision making within the organisation and opportunities for volunteers to be included within this and communication between the organisation, volunteers and the general public.

#### 4.6.2 Semi Structured Interviews

Following data analysis of the questionnaires, a report of the findings was provided to each National Program. This allowed key stakeholders within the National Program the opportunity to understand how volunteers felt regarding the organisation prior to them taking part in a semi-structured interview. They were also provided with an interview schedule (Appendix D & E) with a combination of information gathering questions regarding the facts about any policies or procedures in place and also on their opinions on the views and knowledge of the volunteers in relation to this. The final section of the interview focused on the future in an attempt to garner a consensus on how the organisation and indeed potentially other multinational, multicultural organisation may use information such as this to enhance their volunteer retention rates.

#### 4.7 Participants and recruitment

Initial contact between the researcher and the National Programs was facilitated by Special Olympics Europe Eurasia research department. An introduction email was sent by Special Olympics Europe Eurasia introducing both the study and the researcher. This was followed up with an email from the researcher to arrange a skype call with the organisation to discuss participation. Once the relevant permissions were received from each National Program: SOIreland, SOGB and SOHellas (Greece), the lead staff contact was provided with a test copy of the questionnaire to ensure they were aware of all details and requirements of the research. These countries were chosen for contact following consultation with Special Olympics Europe Eurasia with several justifications provided:

1. Countries provided a mix of culturally similar and culturally different
2. Special Olympics Ireland and Great Britain are the same 'age' of programme with both being formed in 1978 and Hellas was formed in 1988. This provides a contrast of development of the organisation.
3. There is the potential that international events may have an impact on the recruitment and experiences of volunteers therefore a mix of countries who have and have not hosted International Special Olympics Games.

4. Finally, the size of the National Program may impact the experiences of the volunteers. Special Olympics Ireland has a larger base of registered volunteers than both Great Britain and Hellas thus allowing for comparison between countries.

Also, due to any potential language barriers, SO Hellas were provided the opportunity to take part in a revised version of the questionnaire which would be solely comprised of closed and multiple-choice questions based around the key themes and findings of the English language, open ended questions. This option was declined by SO Hellas who felt the standard of English required to participate in the full study was at an appropriate level for their volunteers. This was confirmed by the level of responses provided during the pilot study therefore ensuring SO Hellas were able to remain as part of the English language based main study.

Inclusion criteria for the study outlined that all participants must be a registered volunteer within their respective National Programs. To ensure adherence to this, a question placed at the consent stage of the questionnaire asked 'Are you a registered volunteer with Special Olympics?' Selecting 'No' to this question resulted in the termination of the questionnaire whilst selecting 'Yes' allowed the participant to proceed. Throughout the data collection period for all countries, only one participant selected 'No' to this question indicating that the recruitment methods utilised; having participants contacted via email by each National Program, was effective in ensuring only those eligible to take part were contacted.

## 4.8 Ethics

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Research Filter Committee at Ulster University (Appendix F).

Full disclosure of the aims, objectives and methods of the research, was provided to the participants through an information letter. This also advised participants that all data stored would be kept completely confidential and as their names are in no way attached to their responses, their anonymity has been fully protected.

Prior to beginning a questionnaire, participants were informed that by submitting the questionnaire, they were providing their consent for their responses to be used for

the purposes of the research. In order to ensure their protection of their right to withdraw, participants were informed that as their personal details were not provided at any stage, once they submitted their questionnaire, there would be no way to identify their responses in order to remove their data. This process is in line with recommendations by the UK Data Service (UK Data Service n.d.) that where no identifiable data such as names are required by participants and they are fully informed on the purposes of the survey and use of the data, then a separate information sheet and consent form is not required.

The final stage of data collection involved one to one semi structured interviews with key stakeholders in Special Olympics. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for the purposes of assisting with data analysis. To ensure data remains confidential, voice files and transcripts are stored within an encrypted folder on a password protected computer. Any hard copies used for the purposes of data analysis are stored in a locked filing cabinet. In both cases, only the researcher has access to the files. Additionally, to ensure anonymity, all participants names have been removed and pseudonyms assigned.

Prior to the interviews being conducted, participants were provided with information on the research and the findings to date in addition to an interview schedule. A consent form (Appendix C) was also included and signed by participants prior to the interview being conducted. To reaffirm consent, at the beginning of each interview, participants were provided with the opportunity to ask any questions they had regarding the research prior to providing verbal consent for the purposes of the audio recording of the interview.

A consideration for the researcher has been managing the potential risk of bias due to their personal involvement as a Special Olympics volunteer within Special Olympics Ireland. To mitigate this risk, the researcher ensured open lines of communication with the supervisory team, particularly during the design phase of the questionnaire ensuring the questions remained open with no leading questions. The researcher also ensured that they did not complete the questionnaire when it was received via email within their voluntary capacity. Furthermore, during the analysis process, any themes developed were re-checked against the raw data to

ensure themes were accurate and further mitigate the risk of bias. Self-regulation was an important process throughout the completion of this study was to help maintain objectivity.

#### 4.9 Data analysis

Due to the mixed methodology approach adopted for this research, multiple data analysis techniques were utilised. Statistical analysis of basic demographic and informational data was conducted using Microsoft Excel 2016. The Coach Motivation Questionnaire Likert scale survey was analysed using SPSS version 25. Whilst Likert Scale data may be analysed using both parametric and non-parametric testing, it is important to consider the most appropriate tests for use within this study. Likert data may be classified as either ordinal or interval depending on how the data measurement is represented i.e. if there is a 'greater than' relationship implied by the data (Boone & Boone, 2012). Recommended analysis for interval Likert Scale data suggests that means, standard deviations and other statistical tests include ANOVAs, t-tests and regression analysis are the most appropriate. This is further support by Norman (2010) who suggests that there is a substantial body of literature indicating that due to the robustness of parametric tests, they are appropriate for the analysis of Likert Scale data.

One of the main criticisms of the use of parametric tests for Likert Data is the meeting of the basic assumptions of research design including sample size and normal distribution. Mircioiu and Atkinson (2017) found no difference in the level of statistical significance in data samples regardless of normally distribution or parametric or non-parametric tests being applied.

The survey produces six dimensions of motivation along the Self Determination Continuum; Intrinsic, Integrated, Identified, Introjected, External and Amotivation. The multiple levels of the survey and the additional variable of Special Olympic National Program (country) indicated that a two-way MANOVA was required to determine between subject effects. Results of the Wilks' Lambda test indicated the requirement to further report on the univariate ANOVA results for between country variations.

A thematic analysis was conducted on all open-ended questions to outline the key areas for discussion identified by the participants. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), the development of themes and potentially making links between these themes through thematic analysis allows for the identification of patterns. One of the key strengths of this method is the flexibility it provides as thematic analysis is not linked to a particular theoretical perspective or underpinned by a single epistemological viewpoint (Clarke & Braun, 2013). An initial starting point within the qualitative data analysis paradigm is to determine whether a deductive or inductive approach is adopted. These forms of logical reasoning provide an entry point into the analysis for the researcher (Reichert, 2014). A deductive approach is often referred to as a top down approach moving from a theory to the eventual proving or disproving of this theory based on the data. Alternatively, inductive reasoning forms a bottom up approach where observations and analysis may guide the tentative formulation of conclusions or theories. Due to the theoretical underpinning of this research within a Self Determination Theory Framework, a deductive process was adopted.

The six phase framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) has been utilised. Phase one involved familiarising oneself with the data. Within this study, this was achieved by reading all qualitative data exported from the online survey tool. Data was exported per survey question and per participating National Program therefore reading the data several times allowed for initial ideas to be generated. Furthermore, transcribing the audio recordings of the follow up interviews prior to reading the transcripts allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data.

Phase two of thematic analysis is the generating of initial codes. Codes were generated based on interesting semantic and latent data. This process of systematic coding of the interesting features of the data involved organising the data into small, meaningful chunks (Tuckett, 2005). *Table 4.2* highlights a section of data extracted from the online survey utilised in this study and the codes applied to these. This was conducted by hand by producing hard copies of all survey and interview data and transcripts and applying highlighters to each code.

Data Extract	Code
Question: - Should volunteers have more powers to make decisions?	
I do think that there are limited opportunities for volunteers to have been involved in decision making at a national level, although this could be because I wasn't as involved at these levels. I think it adds to the sense of feeling valued if volunteers are involved in this process in some ways	1. Communication issues with some volunteers believing there are no opportunities whilst others are made aware of them
If volunteers have the knowledge about sport and working with disability perhaps they could contribute to decision making but that would not apply to me	2. Opportunities vary depending on the level of the organisation i.e. National level versus local or club level
Do not know what power we have apart from making suggestions and when I do am told that it is decided at world level and it is implied that there would be no possibility	3. Experience of the volunteer impacts their ability to inform on decision making

*Table 4.2* Outlining of some initial coding applied to participants answers to a question relating to decision making powers for volunteers

Phase three involved searching for themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) themes allow for something significant or interesting from the codes to be captured and refocus the findings at a broader level. After coding the data, these codes were combined to form overarching themes which are depicted as the three results chapters in this thesis (chapters 5 – 7). Within each of these themes, a number of sub themes are discussed throughout these chapters (*Table 4.3*).

Phase four of the thematic data analysis process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) is the reviewing of the themes. After placing codes into the overarching themes, extensive reviewing of them determines if there is adequate evidence within the data to consider each sub theme within the final results. Patterns were determined within the overarching themes and further analysis allowed the researcher to proceed to a second level of phase four; assessing the overall dataset through re-reading and considering the validity of individual themes within the dataset. It was determined that the themes fully represented the complete dataset within this study.

Overarching theme	Sub themes
The volunteers – formed by a combination of quantitative and qualitative data	Volunteer demographics Volunteer experience The role of the volunteer Volunteer motivation
Volunteer engagement and cultural variations	Demographics Motivation Length of time with the organisation Engagement in research Active volunteers Decision making 'Central'
Policy awareness and strategy	Recruitment Communication with general public Communication with volunteers Falling through the gap Building the volunteer experience

*Table 4.3 Overarching themes with the corresponding sub themes*

Phase five is the defining and naming of themes which aims to “*identify the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about*” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). During this stage, it was important to consider questions such as how the sub themes interacted with the overarching theme and how these overarching themes related to each other. This process has ensured that the themes outlined in Chapters 5 – 7 address the aims of this study.

Finally, phase six is the production of the final report. Due to the study design of this body of work, this formed a two phase approach. Firstly, a report was compiled for each National Program to provide a summary of findings to those taking part in the interviews. This report was kept primarily descriptive rather than analytical to ensure the views or analysis of the researcher did not impact the views of interview participants. As previously mentioned, transcriptions of the interviews were compiled for the purposes of conducting a thematic analysis of the interviews and the final report is presented within this thesis.

## 4.10 Conclusion

With a multitude of methodologies existing within the literature, the selection of the most appropriate data collection method is vital to ensure the integrity and generalisability of research. However, within the field of volunteerism and sport, a



plethora of measures have been used, primarily looking at motivation to volunteer. This has led to a lack of coherency within the literature as well a lack of focus on a variety of populations with very little research taking place amongst volunteers within disability sport. Therefore, this research will use a combination of standardised Likert scale questionnaires previously used within volunteerism in sport literature and also qualitative research questions in order to elicit as much information as possible in relation to volunteer motivation and the area of volunteerism within Special Olympics.

## Chapter 5: The Volunteers

### 5.1 Introduction

As discussed throughout the opening chapters, volunteers play a pivotal role in the success of the sport and recreation sector and perhaps even more so in the field of disability sport.

Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to outline the key findings surrounding who the volunteers are and what their areas of expertise are both in relation to their volunteering experience and their area of work thus highlighting the skill sets they may bring to their voluntary work within Special Olympics. Finally, this chapter will outline the findings surrounding the motivations of volunteers. This data was collected using the Coach Motivation Questionnaire (CMQ) Likert Scale with twenty-one statements based on the six elements of motivation along the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) continuum. It also included the question of familial relationships in regards to motivation thus providing an insight into the autonomy towards the athletes and the organisation itself. By understanding both these areas; who volunteers for Special Olympics and why, researchers, and the organisation itself will be in a better position to inform volunteer recruitment and retention policies by tailoring the volunteer roles to meet the needs of the volunteers.

## 5.2 Gender & Age

Section one of the questionnaire focused on the volunteers' demographic information. Overall, 66.25% of respondents to the questionnaire were female and 33.1% were male. Whilst this was the general trend found, results did vary slightly between each of the participating countries. Special Olympics Ireland (SO Ireland) shows a breakdown of 62.77% to 36.17% female to male and Special Olympics Great Britain (SO GB) reported 63.04% female and 36.96 male. However, there was a difference found in the gender breakdown amongst Special Olympics Hellas (SO Hellas) respondents with 72.95% of respondents being female and only 26.23% male. As was shown in chapters one and three, there is a contradiction in the literature surrounding the gender breakdown of sports volunteers. The sport England volunteer Insight Project (2017) reported that those volunteering in sport were 60% male to 40% female. These results appear to further complicate and contradict this by showing consistently high levels of female volunteers in comparison to their male peers. One potential reason for this could be the added element of caring responsibilities that is required by some athletes. Traditional gender stereotypes and bias suggest mothers take on primary caring roles, an argument strengthened by the UN (2018) volunteers report which highlights that due to family commitments, females are more likely to undertake informal volunteering opportunities. As primary care givers, it is often mothers who will bring their son or daughter to social and sporting activities, particularly to Special Olympics clubs and events, with them then becoming involved in the clubs themselves as volunteers. This is reflected on within this research with a number of female volunteers stating that they had helped to launch SO clubs

in their areas to provide opportunities for their son or daughter with an Intellectual Disability to take part in sports and physical activity; *“We founded our club & I am very attached to it and want to see if succeed for years to come”* (SO Ireland volunteer).

Therefore, when analysed within general sporting literature, the gender breakdown may be considered unusual, however, when disability and caring literature is taken into account, these results become more in line with findings. Organisations such as Special Olympics need to understand where they sit within the volunteering market in relation to where they recruit their volunteers from as well as understanding that they may transcend several fields.

Volunteers were asked to report which age range they fell within. The age ranges outlined were 16 – 17 year olds, 18 – 24, 25 – 34, 35 – 49, 50 – 64 and 65+. A total of 46 SO GB volunteers responded to this question, 122 SO Hellas volunteers and 186 SO Ireland volunteers providing responses to this question. Overall, it is clear to see from *Figure 5.1* that the highest proportion of volunteers can be found within the older age brackets; over 50 year olds, with 42.66% (151 out of 354) and youth volunteers; those aged between 16 – 24 year olds, reporting the lowest proportion with only 12.43% (44 out of 354 respondents). The ages of volunteers showed a greater level of variation between countries than was found in relation to gender. Special Olympics International have classified a youth volunteer as someone aged between 16 – 24 years old (Reach Report 2015). Whilst the significant differences between response rates may impact the overall figures, 15.22% (7) of SO GB volunteers, 13.12% (16) SO Hellas volunteers and 11.29% (21) SO Ireland volunteers who responded to the questionnaires classified themselves as youth volunteers. This is contrary to the findings of the Sport England Volunteer Insight Project (2017) which found that volunteering was high amongst 16 – 25 year olds (22%), although their rates of volunteering in the over 65 age group are reflected in the findings with 13%. Furthermore, the most common age range of volunteers varied amongst the countries studied. The most common range amongst SO GB volunteers was 50 – 64 year olds; 30.44% (14). This was also the most common age range amongst SO Ireland volunteers with 33.87% (63), however, this was only the third most common range amongst SO Hellas volunteers with only 22.13% (27). The highest response rate from SO Hellas volunteers came within the 25 – 34 year old age group with 31.15% (38). This also greatly impacts the number of volunteers classified as older volunteers with SO Ireland showing the highest number of volunteers aged over 50 years old; 50.00% (93), SO GB findings showing 45.66% (21). In comparison, the results from SO Hellas volunteers showed only 30.33% (37) volunteers aged over 50 years old. When

compared directly with the analysis provided on Special Olympics volunteers world-wide, the rate of youth volunteering within this study are comparatively low; with the Reach Report (2016) indicating 29.35% of SO volunteers aged 12 – 25. As this is based on an analysis of the Special Olympics databases compared to the self-report voluntary participation within this study, it must be considered that the results shown have been impacted by a lack of engagement in the research as opposed to true lower levels of youth volunteers.

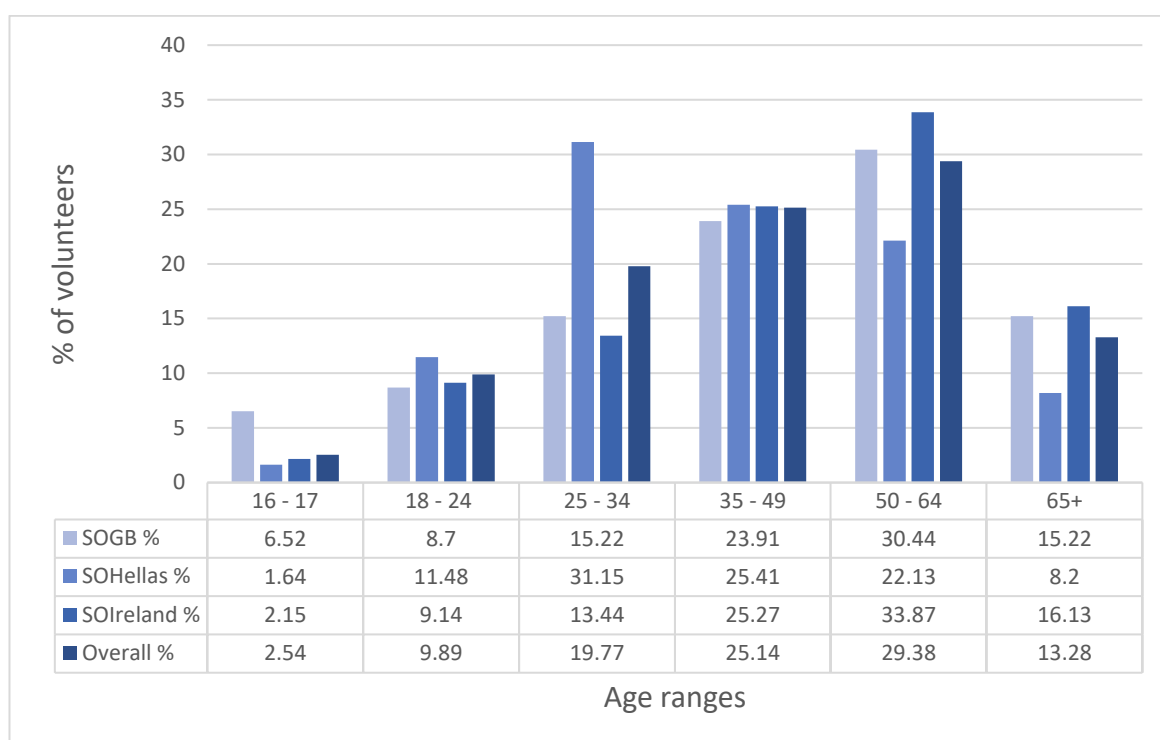


Figure 5.1 Age range of volunteers within SO GB, Hellas and Ireland with overall values

### 5.3 Marital Status and dependents

In order to gain a full understanding of some of the constraints that may be placed on the free time of volunteers and also to paint a full picture of who volunteers for Special Olympics, respondents were asked about their marital status and any dependants they may have. Volunteers were asked to answer single, married, divorced, widowed or 'I prefer not to answer' regarding their marital status. They were also asked if they had any dependents. Whilst the only choice of answers for this were yes or no, this was further clarified by an additional question for those who answered yes, where they were asked if their dependents were children, adults or elderly and also how many they had. The percentage of volunteers married was 46.35% (165) and a further 39.89% (142) were single as can be seen in Table 5.1. There was however, 3.93% (14) preferred not say their marital status and an additional 47 skipping this question which may impact the overall values. When broken down by

country, some differences can be seen; SO Ireland showed the highest rate of married volunteers with 55.85% and 31.15% (38) of SO GB and SO Hellas volunteers respectively. The lower numbers of married volunteers in SO Hellas was therefore reflected by them showing the highest rate of both single and divorced volunteers with 54.92% (67) and 8.20% (10) respectively. Both SO GB and SO Ireland reported very similar rates of single volunteers [30.44% (14); 32.45% (62)]. Whilst indicating that SO Hellas showed the highest rate of divorced volunteers, rates amongst the three participating national programs were similar [SO Hellas 8.2% (10); SO Ireland 7.53% (14); SO GB 6.52% (3)]. This was also the same for those volunteers who were widowed with SO GB results [4.35% (2)] showing marginally higher values than SO Hellas [2.46% (3)] and SO Ireland [1.61% (3)].

When analysing age and marital status, one may postulate a relationship however, this does not appear to be the case within these results. The high levels of single volunteers within Greece (SO Hellas) do not reflect higher levels of youth volunteering although these are not significantly different to SO GB and SO Ireland volunteers. Therefore, it should be considered that cultural or socio-economical factor may impact the marriage rates within each country.

Answer	SOGB		SO Hellas		SO Ireland		Overall	
	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%
Single	14	30.44	67	54.92	61	32.45	142	39.89
Married	22	47.83	38	31.15	105	55.85	165	46.35
Divorced	3	6.52	10	8.2	14	7.53	27	7.58
Widowed	2	4.35	3	2.46	3	1.61	8	2.25
I prefer not to say	5	10.87	4	3.28	5	2.69	14	3.93
Total	46		122		188		356	

*Table 5.1 Marital status of volunteers overall and broken down per participating National Program*

In relation to dependents, overall, 42.98% (150) do have dependents and 57.02% (199) do not. As with marital status, SO GB [44.44% (20) yes and 55.55% (25) no] and SO Ireland [46.24% (86) yes and 53.76% (100) no] showed similar results regarding levels of volunteers with dependents, however differences can be seen when compared with the results from SO Hellas where only 37.29% (44) reported having dependents and 62.71% (74) did not. There was no difference in the numbers of dependents per volunteer per country with a relatively even split between one and two dependents. There were outliers in each country with some volunteers stating they had between four and six dependents, however, the proportion stating this did not vary between country. Due to the number of respondents with multiple combinations of dependents i.e. children, adult and elderly, and with several respondents

not outlining their breakdown, it is difficult to fully ascertain any significant differences between countries. However, it can be seen in *Table 5.2* that child dependents make up the largest proportion with 91 volunteers having children (51 SO Ireland, 27 SO Hellas and 12 SO GB). Sixty volunteers (35 SO Ireland, 18 SO Hellas and 7 SO GB) had adult dependents and 21 volunteers (9 SO Ireland, 7 SO Hellas and 5 SO GB) having elderly dependents. Again, it is imperative to reiterate that these numbers do not all represent individual respondents as some have dependents in two or more of the categories.

When comparing the results of both marital status and dependents, it can be seen that there may be links between these areas with similar rates of single volunteers as those with no dependents. SO Hellas results showed 54.92% (67) of volunteers as single and 62.71% (74) did not have dependents. Similar results can be seen for both SO GB and SO Ireland as seen in *Tables 5.1 and 5.2*. Furthermore, as will be shown later in this chapter, there are an average of 25.4% of volunteers who do not volunteer due to a familial relationship with an athlete. Whilst it may be postulated that this may have impacted the levels of volunteers with dependents, no statistical relationship is evident.

Answer	SO GB		SOHellas		SO Ireland		Overall	
	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%
Yes	20	44.44	44	37.29	86	46.24	150	42.98
No	25	55.55	74	62.71	100	53.76	199	57.02
Total	45		118		186		349	
	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%
Children	12	50	27	51.92	52	54.17	91	52.907
Adult	7	29.17	18	34.62	35	36.46	60	34.884
Elderly	5	20.83	7	13.46	9	9.375	21	12.209

*Table 5.2 Number of volunteers with dependents and breakdown of type of dependent overall and per country*

## 5.4 Employment

To provide an overall picture of the areas of expertise as well as give further indication of potential free leisure time of volunteers, respondents were asked to identify their employment status and also the industry they worked in if they were employed. Categories listed within the employment status question were; employed full-time, employed part time, self-employed, retired, unemployed, student and other. Overall, a significant majority of volunteers were in employment at the time of completing the questionnaire with a total of

61.89% (229) stating their status as full [42.43% (157)] or part time [12.71% (47)] employment or that they were self-employed [6.76% (25)]. *Table 5.3* shows consistent results amongst participating countries for both full and part time employment with one of the most significant differences being found amongst self-employment rates with SO Ireland indicating only 2.58% (5) in self-employment in comparison to 12.60% (16) and 8.16% (4) in SO Hellas and SO GB respectively. Rates of retired volunteers were reasonably consistent across countries with SO Ireland results showing 16.49% (32) and SO GB 16.33% (8) with SO Hellas slightly lower at 12.6% (16). The most significant difference was found amongst the rates of unemployment with SO Hellas reporting the highest rates at 8.66% (11) and SO Ireland at 6.19% (12), however, the results from SO GB respondents only showing 2.04% (1) unemployment rates.

Answer	SO GB		SOHellas		SO Ireland		Overall	
	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%
Employed								
Full-time	19	38.78	53	41.73	85	43.81	157	42.43
Employed								
Part-time	8	16.33	14	11.02	25	12.89	47	12.70
Self Employed	4	8.16	16	12.6	5	2.58	25	6.76
Retired	8	16.33	16	12.6	32	16.49	56	15.14
Unemployed	1	2.04	11	8.66	12	6.19	24	6.49
Student	7	14.29	5	3.94	20	10.31	32	8.65
Other	2	4.08	12	9.45	15	7.73	29	7.84
Total	49		127		194		370	

*Table 5.3 The employment status of Special Olympics volunteers per country and overall*

On further analysis, the retirement rates within both SO GB and SO Ireland numbers (8 volunteers and 32 volunteers) correlate almost exactly with their number of volunteers over the age of 65 (7 at SO GB, 30 SO Ireland). However, the difference in the retirement numbers and over 65 age category numbers amongst SO Hellas volunteers show the highest variation; 16 retired and 10 aged 65+. This is despite statistics suggesting the retirement age in Greece is higher than that of Ireland or the United Kingdom (trading economics 2017). There is a higher number of volunteers retiring before the age of 65 in SO Hellas than in SO Ireland and SO GB. There is no indication of the reason for this therefore further research is required.

Volunteers were then asked, 'if employed, what sector do you work in?' In order to ensure no misunderstanding of the terminology 'sector' across participating National Programs,

examples of e.g. hospitality, education, services were provided. Across all National Programs, a high proportion of volunteers work in either healthcare or education as can be seen in *Table 5.4* with a total of 35.76% (64) of the 179 respondents who provided details of their employment. However, when broken down per country, some significant differences can be seen, 32.99% (32) of SO Ireland and 31.03% (18) of SO Hellas with the difference then being found within SO GB where 58.33% (14) work in healthcare or education. Interestingly, there is potentially a correlation between the number of volunteers employed in healthcare and the healthcare system in each country as the most are employed in this sector is SO GB which is the only fully Nationalised system of the three. Could there be links between the motivation to volunteer amongst those in healthcare within the privatised sector and the National Health Service? To assess this, further information from participants is required to ascertain their job role and their motivation as the UK also has additional private companies offering healthcare which volunteers could be employed through. This opens the broader question of how employment sector may impact their levels of intrinsic motivation for future research. Additionally, it is also interesting to note the numbers of volunteers employed within the sport sector with only 4.47% (8) with two of those in SO Ireland six in SO Hellas. None of those responding from SO GB were employed in the sport sector.

Overall, across participating National Programs, a large array of sectors and industries are represented by respondents ranging from the retail sector, hospitality and tourism, construction and manufacturing and government and Non-governmental organisations. The National Program with the lowest variety in employment is SO GB however, it is important to acknowledge that this may be due to a lower number of responses than found amongst other programs. The wide variety of volunteering roles available within Special Olympics mean that a range of skill sets and expertise is required to fulfil these roles. Whilst the organisation regularly offers training to allow volunteers to effectively undertake roles, these results provide the organisation with a greater understanding of who their volunteers are and what areas of expertise they may require more focus on for their recruitment strategies.

Furthermore, this begins to address a gap in volunteering literature as there is a succinct lack of research which allows us to understand who volunteers in various sectors, information which may be vital for organisations struggling to recruit volunteers; one of the most interesting points of these results is the lack of people employed within the sports sector volunteering with a sporting organisation. On the other end of the spectrum, the highest number of volunteers are employed within the healthcare sector. This perhaps reinforces the earlier point in this chapter that Special Olympics volunteers may be more likely to come



from caring roles. Does this therefore raise the question about where the organisation fits into the market; as a sporting organisation or as an organisation with a focus on assisting people with Intellectual Disabilities through sport i.e. 'sport plus' or 'plus sport'?

Today's society places many constraints on the free leisure time of people such as the number of dependents they have, whether these dependents are children, adults or elderly and also their current level of employment. It has been shown that Special Olympics volunteers represent a wide variety of employment sectors and also of these employed full time, part time, unemployed etc. In relation to dependents, a range from 0 – 6 existed across participants. It is therefore clear that Special Olympics is able to provide opportunities to volunteers regardless of free leisure time these individuals may have available. This suggests that when recruiting for volunteer roles, other organisations may look to Special Olympics and the flexible they offer their volunteers in relation to time commitments. The ability to offer more ad hoc positions, attending events, performing administration tasks, fundraising etc as possible alternatives to regular, weekly roles within clubs encourages volunteers with low levels of free leisure time to remain involved.

	SO Ireland			SO GB			SO Hellas			Overall		
	Response	Total	%	Response	Total	%	Response	Total	%	Response	Total	%
Healthcare	17	97	17.53	6	24	25.00	10	58	17.24	33	179	18.44
Education	15	97	15.46	8	24	33.33	8	58	13.79	31	179	17.32
Government	19	97	19.59	1	24	4.17	4	58	6.90	24	179	13.41
Hospitality & tourism	1	97	1.03	1	24	4.17	6	58	10.34	8	179	4.47
Sport	2	97	2.06	0	24	0.00	6	58	10.34	8	179	4.47
Services/ business	16	97	16.49	6	24	25.00	7	58	12.07	29	179	16.20
Construction/ Manufacturing	14	97	14.43	0	24	0.00	4	58	6.90	18	179	10.06
retail	5	97	5.15	0	24	0.00	1	58	1.72	6	179	3.35

*Table 5.4 A breakdown of the main sectors of employment per country and overall*

## 5.5 Volunteer experience

In order to fully ascertain the experience level of volunteers within Special Olympics, questions were asked including the length of time they had volunteered with Special Olympics as well as questions looking at their volunteering experiences with other organisations. This will give an indication of the levels of experience and expertise that volunteers may bring to their role within Special Olympics as well as providing an insight into the loyalty and potential autonomy with the organisation. A loyal volunteer base who remain with the organisation for an extended period of time increases efficiency surrounding volunteer recruitment and retention thus benefitting the organisation when reporting to funders. Firstly, volunteers were asked when they first registered as a volunteer with Special Olympics. Overall, 29.86% (103) respondents have been with the organisation between six and ten years and a further 20.87% (72) for more than ten years thus meaning slightly over half of all respondents [50.73% (175)] have over six years' experience within the organisation. This did however vary significantly between National Programs. SO Ireland had the highest level of response from experienced volunteers with 58.02% (105) with 6+ years' experience, SO Hellas 44.92% (53) and SO GB 36.96% (17). SO Hellas had a larger proportion of volunteers in the 4 – 5 years category [30.51% (36)] in comparison to SO Ireland [14.92% (27)] and SO GB [10.87% (5)], however these results were reversed for the 1 – 3 years category where SO GB [36.96% (17)] had the largest proportion, SO Ireland had 14.92% (27) and SO Hellas had 9.32% (11). As shown in *Table 5.5*, these values in particular show more deviation from the overall figures than the other categories listed. From these findings, it is clear to see that volunteers within Special Olympics have a lot of experience with the organisation and also, remain with the organisation for a significant period of time.

As previously discussed in the methodology SO Ireland hosted the World Summer Games in 2003 and SO Hellas in 2011, timings which directly correlate with higher levels of volunteering over a longer period of time. This evidences that the recruitment drives conducted specifically for International Games within Ireland and Greece and the subsequent experiences at the games provided higher levels of volunteer satisfaction indicating a positive influence on intention to volunteer in the future (Hwang, 2010; Giannoulakis, Wang & Felver, 2015). SO GB showed an increased number of volunteers with 1 – 3 years (17; 36.96%) experience with the organisation. This may show a positive impact of a media campaign for team GB competing at the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games in LA, however, it may also represent a positive impact of the legacy campaigns following London 2012 Olympic Games and Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. Whilst

the initial motivation of these volunteers may have been to participate in short-term episodic volunteering, they have continued to longer term volunteering. The experiences of the volunteers may have created a sense of community, belonging and identity, which has led to their retention; a finding supported by the research of Kristiansen et al (2015).

Many volunteers from all participating National Programs mention the friendships they have developed and the sense of community developed through their involvement; *“it is a great way for both (athletes and coaches) to make new friends and it really brings all different people together”* (SO Ireland volunteer), *“I have met new friends”* (SO Ireland volunteer), *“we are a wonderful team, all friends that gives us such a please to work together”* (SO Hellas volunteer), *“it’s a loving community you can’t let go”* (SO Hellas volunteer). This is something that Special Olympics have been able to do effectively despite the size of the organisation world-wide. The organisational structure of Special Olympics with National offices and each country further divided into regions or states allows these smaller communities and friendships to develop and this is something which other organisations can learn from Special Olympics. This community leads to greater autonomy and loyalty to the organisation, thus more volunteers committed to long term volunteering.

	SO Ireland		SO Hellas		SO GB		Overall	
	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%
Less than 6 months	6	3.32	12	10.17	2	4.35	20	5.80
6mths - 1 year	16	8.84	6	5.09	5	10.87	27	7.83
1 - 3 years	27	14.92	11	9.32	17	36.96	55	15.94
4 - 5 years	27	14.92	36	30.51	5	10.87	68	19.71
6 - 10 years	56	30.94	40	33.90	7	15.22	103	29.86
more than 10 years	49	27.08	13	11.02	10	21.74	72	20.87

*Table 5.5 The length of time since first registering as a Special Olympics volunteer*

To understand what external voluntary experience volunteers may bring or have brought to Special Olympics, they were asked two key questions:

1. Do you currently volunteer for any other organisations?
2. Have you ever in the past volunteered for an organisation other than Special Olympics?

Each of these were also further elaborated on by asking participants to name or list any organisations they volunteer or have volunteered for or to list the industry or sector this was within. Furthermore, for the second question on where they have volunteered in the past, participants were asked why they no longer volunteer with a list of options provided for this including; work commitments, family commitments, a lack of opportunities in their areas, lack of interest, participants did not enjoy the experience, it was a one-off event or other, with specification of this also asked.

Overall, over half of all respondents currently volunteer for other organisations [54.94% (189)], however, this varied significantly between participating National Programs with SO Ireland having the lowest rate [44.20% (82)], and SO GB having 58.70% (27). The largest variation therefore was seen between respondents from SO Hellas where 70.09% (82) stated that they are currently volunteering with other organisations. When then asked if they had ever in the past volunteered for organisations they are now not volunteering for, SO Ireland was the only National Program to show an increase from those currently volunteering. This showed an increase of 12.16% (22) suggesting that these volunteers have stopped volunteering for other organisations but are continuing to volunteer for SO Ireland. In contrast, the rate of those currently volunteering in comparison to those who are no longer volunteering for some organisations in SO Hellas dropped from 70.09% (82) to 58.04% (65); a decrease of 12.05% (17). This perhaps indicates the number of people volunteering in Greece is on the increase although further investigation and comparison is required with general volunteering trends to ascertain whether or not this is a trend found more within SO Hellas. In contrast to these significant differences within SO Ireland and SO Hellas, SO GB's results remain consistent with 58.70% (27) currently volunteering with other organisations and 56.52% (26) indicating they have volunteered for other organisations in the past. This consistency amongst Special Olympics in comparison to the change amongst volunteering for other organisations perhaps also suggests a loyalty or autonomy with Special Olympics which some may feel is missing from other organisations, causing them to drift away from those organisations. This provides further support for the earlier indication that Special Olympics provide a high level of camaraderie which encourages volunteers to remain loyal to the organisation.

Across all participating National Programs and across both current volunteering and past volunteering there are no significant differences in the variety of organisations that people volunteer for. Sports, including disability sports is consistently the most common sector with youth services including the Scouts and Girl Guides and also disability services other than

sports with similar levels of volunteering. This lack of variation may indicate a consistent level of interest in fields that may all be relevant to Special Olympics i.e. disability, sport and young people. Again, bringing in the employment industries of participants, the numbers volunteering within sporting organisations is interesting when compared to those employed with the sports sector. Whilst coaches etc are vital to the sporting development of athletes, it would appear to be counter productive to the efficiency of recruitment strategies to focus on those from sporting backgrounds. Research regarding free leisure time suggests that many people now use volunteering as leisure time as this has a positive impact on work related stress recover (Mojza et al, 2010, 2011) therefore the promotion of the fun, enjoyment and social elements of Special Olympics will provide volunteers with an avenue to enjoy their leisure time away from their work place stresses.

In relation to those volunteers who are no longer volunteering for other organisations, a range of reasons was provided. Two answers which scored consistently high across the three National Programs were work commitments with 35.29% (6) in SO GB, 29.63% (24) in SO Ireland and 21.7% (10) in SO Hellas, and also that the event was a one off with 34.8% (16) SO Hellas, 18.52% (15) in SO Ireland and 17.65% (3) SO GB. The significantly higher figures from SO Hellas with respect to the event being a one-off event perhaps relates to the number of those who previously indicated they volunteered at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and marathon events. One point of note was the low rates of volunteers indicating a lack of interest or having not enjoyed the experience as the reason for no longer volunteering with a particular organisation and indeed no volunteers indicated either of these within SO GB. Only 6.17% (5) volunteers from SO Ireland gave this as a reason and 15.2% (7) from SO Hellas. Whilst these rates of lack of enjoyment or interest are extremely low, they are considerably higher than the reasons for being a non-active Special Olympics volunteer as no volunteers across the three participating National Programs stated this as a reason. The most notable point for Special Olympics as an organisation is the numbers who indicated they no longer volunteer for an organisation due to a lack of opportunity in their area [SO GB 23.53% (4), SO Hellas 17.4% (8), SO Ireland 8.64% (7)] as this potentially represents volunteers who have a desire and availability to increase the number of hours they spend volunteering. The only participants listing financial or geographical reasons within the 'other' category were those from SO Hellas. As mentioned in earlier chapters, due to the number of Islands, Greece presents a geographical challenge to Special Olympics as an organisation in enabling volunteers to participate in other regions. Furthermore, over the last ten years, Greece has

had an extremely challenging economic situation which has greatly impacted the money available to people for leisure time and thus also for volunteering.

Overall therefore, this research indicated that individuals volunteering for Special Olympics programs not only volunteer for a prolonged period of time, but also bring with them a wealth of experience from a variety of organisations, but predominantly from organisations within sectors that are pertinent to those covered under the umbrella of Special Olympics; disability, sports and young people. This study provides insights into who volunteers for Special Olympics at a depth previously not researched and should therefore be utilized by a) the individual National Programs who have participated in this research and b) the organisation as a whole to better tailor both recruitment strategies but also the overall volunteer experience to improve volunteer satisfaction and subsequently retention rates. It also potentially suggests that high levels of role flexibility and perhaps 'job sharing' of more formalised, time consuming roles should be available to help reduce the rate of volunteers dropping off due to work or family commitments. Roles such as Head Coach, Club Chairperson or Head of Delegation require high levels of time commitment which may put some volunteers with the skills necessary for this role off committing to it. Furthermore, the attrition rates of volunteers due to their beliefs that a lack of opportunities existed shows communication issues which need to be improved or eradicated to help the organisation grow. Volunteers within Special Olympics enjoy their experiences more so than when volunteering for other organisations indicating that this level of satisfaction is related to higher levels of intrinsic motivation to continue to volunteer (Ma & Draper, 2017) and supporting earlier research by Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) who found that to improve retention rates, organisations should improve volunteer satisfaction rates.

## 5.6 The role of the volunteer

Within Special Olympics, and indeed potentially numerous volunteer organisations, volunteers need to assume multiple roles in order to ensure events are able to run and clubs can operate. This notion was tested by asking which roles best applied to them with the clarification of asking them to tick all the options which apply. Furthermore, this question also allows the researcher to check if there is a good representation of all roles available to Special Olympics volunteers amongst participants enhancing the reliability of the research. The options available were; head coach, assistant coach, chaperone, other club role (including treasurer, secretary, general volunteer), event volunteer, sports official,

administration support, committee member (regional committee, board member) or other (please specify).

The roles outlined were all represented across participants and numbers show that volunteers do take on several roles. Within SO Hellas responses, 112 volunteers answered this question with 178 roles being undertaken leaving an average of 1.59 roles per volunteer. This was the lowest value with SO GB representing the highest value of 2.07 roles per volunteer (93 roles across 45 respondents) and SO Ireland returning an average of 1.76 roles per volunteer with 312 roles undertaken by the 177 volunteers who provided responses to this question. These results may be interpreted in one of two ways; a) it shows a willingness and loyalty of volunteers to undertake multiple roles and b) it shows a lack of volunteers within the National Programs to undertake all the roles required for the program to function at the level it is striving for, to continue to grow. However, a combination of these is the most likely as volunteers within this study indicate high levels of autonomy and loyalty and are more likely to devote more time to additional roles to assist the functioning of the program. Additionally, research has shown that volunteers are vital to the delivery of sporting opportunities (de Cruz, 2005; Doherty, 2008) yet the role of sports coaches are notoriously difficult to fulfil (Paiement, 2007). Therefore, as an organisation, Special Olympics require this level of knowledge on the roles undertaken by their volunteers to help prevent volunteer burnout impacting attrition rates.

The role of event volunteer was consistently the highest reported role across the three participating countries; SO GB with 64.71% (22) of roles, 49.03% (76) SO Ireland and 55.40% (46) SO Hellas. This indicates that a high proportion of volunteers take part as event volunteers which is more of an ad hoc role in addition to their other roles which may be a more regular role such as a coaching or club role. Furthermore, the least common roles identified by participants was the roles of chaperone and sports official. This was consistent across all participating National Programs. Again, these roles occur on a less frequent basis with sports officials primarily only being involved in individual events and also being a role that involves specialist training through National Governing Bodies for each sport. The role of chaperone describes the social or caring role provided for athletes predominately at residential trips or National and International Games. In the majority of cases, this is a combined Assistant Coach – Chaperone role. Due to this, it is possible to postulate that the lower level of reporting of the chaperone role may be due to the role perception to be that of a coach as opposed to a chaperone.



Other roles not listed that were identified by participants was the role of families' co-ordinator/ volunteer with others stating that they have provided technical or graphics work for the organisation. One volunteer from SO Hellas outlined that they volunteered as a translator as they speak seven languages. Whilst this, and the families' roles outlined were most likely carried out at an event, it is interesting to note that they have view this as separate or in addition to the role of event volunteer.

## 5.7 Volunteer Motivation

To deliver a high level of volunteer satisfaction, an organisation must gain an understanding of why an individual chooses to volunteer for them. Therefore, section three of the questionnaire focused solely on volunteer motivation. Firstly, there is a preconceived notion amongst volunteers that many of the volunteers within Special Olympics are family members of athletes which may increase their autonomous motivation levels. Therefore, participants were asked to answer true or false to the statement 'I started to volunteer because I know or am related to an athlete in Special Olympics'. Additionally, the Coach Motivation Questionnaire (CMQ) was used to assess the motivation of volunteers within a framework based on the dimensions of the Self Determination Theory continuum (Deci & Ryan 2000). This questionnaire used a twenty-two item, seven point Likert Scale with three – four items associated with each of the six dimensions of the SDT continuum; Intrinsic, Integrated, Identified, Introjected, External and Amotivation as outlined in *Figure 5.2*. The word 'coach' was replaced by the word 'volunteer' in four of the statements to ensure it was more applicable to both sports and non-sports volunteers within Special Olympics.

As previously mentioned, participants were asked to answer true or false regarding whether or not they had started volunteering because they were related to or knew a Special Olympics athlete. As outlined in *Table 5.6* overall, false scored significantly higher than true; 74.59% (229) to 25.41% (78) respectively. Whilst each of the participating National Programs showed similar ratios of true to false [SO Ireland 29.82% (51) true, 70.18% (120) false; SO GB 25% (11) true, 75% (33) false], SO Hellas reported an even larger difference between true [17.39% (16)] and false [82.61% (76)]. This contradicts the feelings of some volunteers who suggested that *"families do everything"* (SO Ireland volunteer) and that *"club committees were relatives of the athletes"* (SO Ireland). No previous research exists to provide any comparable data on this area therefore it is not possible to determine if this is a representative sample of Special Olympics volunteers with and without a familial relationship with athletes. It may be possible to suggest that family members volunteer due

to the perception of responsibility towards their athlete with non-family members volunteering for more autonomous or perhaps altruistic reasons. Further qualitative research is required to better determine the ratio and motivations of family members and non-family member volunteers and how this may impact their motivation. Understanding more about the motivations of family member volunteers will enable Special Olympics, or any organisation to predict intention to continue to volunteer once their athlete ceases to participate in the sport. Regarding family member volunteers, athlete retention is therefore as important for the organisation as the retention of the volunteers themselves.

Continuum	Statements
Intrinsic	<i>Because I find it stimulating</i>
	<i>Because I get a good feeling out of it</i>
	<i>Because I enjoy the effort I invest</i>
	<i>Because I enjoy the interaction I have with athletes</i>
Integrated	<i>Because volunteering is fundamental to who I am</i>
	<i>Because volunteering is integral to my life</i>
	<i>Because it personifies my values and beliefs</i>
Identified	<i>Because it contributes to my development as a person</i>
	<i>Because it is moving me toward my personal goals</i>
	<i>Because it allows me to achieve my personal goals</i>
Introjected	<i>Because I don't want to let my athletes down</i>
	<i>Because if I quit it would mean I'd failed</i>
	<i>Because I feel responsible for the athletes' performance</i>
	<i>Because I feel pressure from myself to win</i>
External	<i>To be respected by others</i>
	<i>To get recognition from others</i>
	<i>Because I want to be appreciated by others</i>
	<i>Because I like the extrinsic rewards (i.e., money) associated with winning</i>
Amotivation	<i>I often think my volunteering efforts are a waste of time</i>
	<i>Sometimes I don't know why I volunteer anymore</i>
	<i>Sometimes I feel the costs outweigh the benefits</i>
	<i>Sometimes I question my desire to continue volunteering</i>

Figure 5.2 Statements used within the CMQ and their associated area within the SDT continuum

	SO Ireland		SO Hellas		SO GB		Overall	
	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%	Response	%
True	51	29.82	16	17.39	11	25	78	25.41
False	120	70.18	76	82.61	33	75	229	74.59

*Table 5.6 Number of volunteers who registered due to a familial relationship or knowing an athlete*

In order to assess volunteer motivation, the CMQ was adapted by replacing the word coach with volunteer in four of the statements. Volunteers were asked to rate each statement on a Likert scale ranging from 'not true at all' (1) to 'very true' (7) with a neutral statement of 'neither true nor untrue' given as a score of (4). The statements in the scale fit within the dimensions outlined by the SDT continuum ranging from Intrinsically motivated to Amotivated. The statements pertaining to each area within the continuum can be seen in *Figure 5.2* and show the range of statements used to allow volunteers to give a true reflection on why they volunteer with Special Olympics. To assess the internal consistency of the CMQ for use within this population of both sporting and non-sporting volunteers within Special Olympics, Cronbach alpha analysis was conducted via SPSS with a value of  $\alpha = .868$  showing a high level of reliability across all 22 items of the subscale. Previous studies using the CMQ across cultures and populations also found high levels of internal consistency ranging from 0.62 (McLean, Mallet & Newcombe, 2012) to 0.898 (da Silva et al, 2018) indicating a strong level of reliability within this sub group of volunteers in Special Olympics.

It can be seen from the results in *Table 5.7* that participants scored higher than the standardised mean of the CMQ on the Intrinsic, Integrated, Identified and Introjected elements of the SDT continuum and lower on the external regulation and amotivation elements. Overall, the Wilks'  $\lambda$  results of the MANOVA show significant results ( $P \leq .000$ ) suggesting variations between countries. However, when broken down to the variations of each dimension of the CMQ subscale (Intrinsic, Integrated, Identified, Introjected, External and Amotivation), it can be seen that not all dimensions were statistically significant as shown by *Table 5.8*. This must be further investigated through ANOVA tests on each dimension of the CMQ to assess if significant cross country or cultural variations are present.

The CMQ average rating for Intrinsic motivation is 5.89 on the 1 – 7 Likert scale and the overall results of Special Olympics volunteers is 6.22. This indicated that Special Olympics volunteers are significantly more intrinsically motivated than the CMQ average. Results of the MANOVA indicate that Intrinsic motivation variations between countries are not

	CMQ Mean	SO Ireland	SO Hellas	SO GB	Overall
Intrinsic	5.89	6.2	6.3	6.15	6.22
Integrated	4.7	5.39	6.06	4.89	5.45
Identified	4.72	4.92	5.61	4.37	4.97
Introjected	3.81	4.01	4.25	3.46	3.91
External Regulation	2.91	2.98	2.64	2.47	2.70
Amotivation	2.48	2.05	1.96	2.17	2.06

Table 5.7 Outlining the mean CMQ ratings per SDT continuum motivation type per country

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Country	Intrinsic	0.773	2	0.387	0.631	0.533	0.004
	Integrated	45.329	2	22.665	15.905	0.000	0.097
	Identified	50.721	2	25.361	16.658	0.000	0.101
	Introjected	16.837	2	8.418	4.338	0.014	0.029
	External	26.221	2	13.110	5.678	0.004	0.037
	Amotivation	1.668	2	0.834	0.474	0.623	0.003

Table 5.8 MANOVA results for Between-Subject Effects on the CMQ dimensions of Self-Determination Theory

statistically significant ( $P=0.533$ ) with a very small effect size ( $\eta_p^2 = 0.004$ ). However, the pairwise comparison indicates no differences between the Intrinsic motivation levels of volunteers from SO Ireland, SO GB and SO Hellas. More variation is seen between SO Hellas and SO Ireland ( $P=0.379$ ) and SO GB ( $P=0.612$ ) than between SO Ireland and SO GB ( $P=1.0$ ) but there is no significance in these variations thus suggesting that culture does not play a role in the Intrinsic motivation of Special Olympics volunteers. Across the four intrinsic motivation statements, the highest scoring was *‘Because I enjoy the interaction I have with the athletes’* with a score of 6.4 out of 7. Athletes within Special Olympics provide the organisation with a unique selling point to their prospective volunteers. Statements such as *“when working with the athletes I am humbled”* (SO Ireland volunteer, *“Inspiring athletes”* (SO GB volunteer) and *“It is always fun, with great volunteers, athletes and SOH staff”* (SO Hellas volunteer) highlights and supports the positive result of this area of the CMQ. A major learning point for organisations who rely on the work of volunteers is to effectively utilize

their unique selling point. The clear use of this through Special Olympics advertising and media campaigns which portray the fun personalities of their athletes and their interactions with volunteers as opposed to the competitive sports side of the organisation.

The ratings for the integrated motivation element of the continuum vary more across National Programs with SO GB scoring 4.89, the closest to the 4.7 CMQ mean, SO Ireland scoring 5.39 and SO Hellas once again indicating the highest score of 6.06 with this being the only score that is statistically significant. Between country effects show no significant difference between SO Ireland and SO GB ( $P=0.52$ ), with significant results between SO Ireland and SO Hellas ( $P=0.000$ ) and between SO GB and SO Hellas ( $P=0.000$ ) with an overall medium effect size ( $\eta_p^2 = 0.097$ ). This suggests that variations in levels of Integrated motivation may be due to culture with SO Ireland and SO GB showing lower levels of Integrated motivation than their SO Hellas peers. However, all three countries show higher levels of Integrated motivation than the mean ratings for the CMQ suggesting Special Olympics volunteers overall rate Integrated motivation higher than volunteer coaches within mainstream sports. The beliefs of the volunteers within Special Olympics are of higher importance than with mainstream sports coaches with volunteering being fundamental to them as a person. Therefore, the role of personality must be considered within future research to determine the impact of this on motivation levels.

The CMQ mean rating for identified motivation is 4.72. Overall, Special Olympics volunteers rated their levels of identified motivation as 4.97 although this does not represent a significant difference. Between country effects show that significant variations exist to varying degrees between all countries. SO Ireland and SO GB volunteers show significant variations to  $P \leq 0.05$  but not to  $P \leq 0.01$  ( $P=0.04$ ). The differences between SO Hellas and both SO Ireland and SO GB volunteers found a higher level of significance ( $P \leq 0.01$ ;  $P=0.000$ ). Overall therefore it must be considered that whilst culture may play a role in the levels of Identified motivation; as shown by the higher level of significance of the variation by SO Hellas volunteers, other factors may also be impacting this area as differences do exist between SO Ireland and SO GB. Agreement with statements for identified motivation suggest a level of desire to develop as a person thus understanding that volunteering contains a level of reciprocity with volunteers also gaining from the experience. Furthermore, this area has shown mixed results with SO GB volunteers less motivated by personal development than the CMQ average with SO Ireland higher and SO Hellas significantly higher.

A higher rating on scores of Introjected indicates motivations related to self-esteem, pride and confidence with CMQ validated results showing mean scores of 3.81. According to the SDT continuum, Introjected is a form of extrinsic motivation, however, the large variation between the mean scores of each statement; 'Because I don't want to let my athletes down' (5.27), 'Because if I quit it would mean I'd failed' (3.52), 'Because I feel responsible for my athletes performance' (4.38) and 'Because I feel pressure from myself to win' (2.84), highlights the concern the volunteers have towards their athletes. Volunteers desire to help athletes achieve regardless of their own motivations perhaps indicates higher levels of altruism amongst Special Olympics volunteers than their mainstream coaching peers. Results within this area show similar results to identified motivation with both SO Ireland (4.01) and SO Hellas (4.25) scoring over the mean rating and SO GB (3.46) scoring lower than the mean. The only significant result found between countries ( $P \leq 0.01$ ) was between SO Hellas and SO GB ( $P = 0.006$ ). There was no significant difference between SO Ireland and SO Hellas ( $P = 5.43$ ) or between SO Ireland and SO GB ( $P = 0.61$ ). Again, this may indicate that variations are due to other factors other than culture.

External regulation, as an extrinsic form of motivation focused on statements such as 'Because I like extrinsic rewards (i.e. money) associated with winning' and 'to get recognition from others'. Scores closer to 1 indicate that volunteers do not agree with these statements. Overall, Special Olympics volunteers rated their external regulation with a score of 2.70 with small variations on this across National Programs with SO GB rating their external regulation lowest (2.47), SO Hellas on 2.64 and SO Ireland at 2.98 with the latter being the only participating program to score higher than the CMQ mean (2.91). Statistically, the only significant finding is between SO Ireland and SO GB volunteers ( $P = 0.003$ ). With no other between country comparisons indicating significant differences ( $P \leq 0.05$ ), it must be considered that culture does not play a role in the External Regulation dimension of the Self-determination continuum for Special Olympics Volunteers.

These results suggest some very interesting findings relevant for both Special Olympics as a multi-cultural organisation and volunteer sports organisations as a whole which may help improve overall volunteer recruitment rates. The numbers of volunteers in Special Olympics, and the continued growth in volunteer numbers year on year since 2011 (*Table 3.1*) show a capability to attract volunteers in a climate where reports suggest that other organisations are struggling.

The final element of the SDT continuum is Amotivation which is assessed through CMQ statements including 'I often think my volunteering efforts are a waste of time' and 'sometimes I question my desire to continue volunteering'. The higher the scores on this scale indicate an increased likelihood of a volunteer becoming disengaged with the organisation and ceasing their voluntary activities. The overall mean amongst the survey participants is 2.06 indicating a low level of agreement with the associated statements regarding amotivation. No significant differences ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) were found between participating countries with SO GB scoring highest on 2.17, SO Ireland on 2.05 and SO Hellas scoring lowest on 1.96. Overall, it is not surprising that the results of this dimension indicate a low level of Amotivation as those volunteers who are willing to participate in the research and engage with the organisation are more likely to continue to volunteer.

Whilst many volunteer led sports organisations promote fun, enjoyment and inclusion, quite often the focus is on skill development and sport. The key recruitment tool for Special Olympics is their mission of social inclusion. Furthermore, they offer a wide range of opportunities for their volunteers with only 25.37% (102) of participants indicating that they undertook the role of either Head Coach or Assistant Coach. This expands the pool of potential volunteers rather than limiting their options to individuals with an interest or experience in sport as volunteers indicated that the organisation *"put me in the correct roles for me"* (SO Ireland volunteer).

## 5.8 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter shows the diverse body of volunteers within Special Olympics and the variations in the motivating factors associated with their joining the organisation. The most common demographic amongst participants was females in the 50 – 64 age range with the rate of youth volunteering (12.43%) significantly lower than the global youth volunteer rate of 30% within Special Olympics. This may require further investigation in order to ascertain if this represents a true reflection of the number of youth volunteers within SO Ireland, Hellas and GB or if it shows that youth volunteers may be less likely to participate in research. Additionally, a high percentage of volunteers are married with a similar proportion purporting to having one or more dependents; with a variation in child, adult and elderly dependents.

In addition to marital status and number of dependents, employment status and number of dependents, employment status may greatly impact the free leisure time of individuals thus limiting the time they have available for volunteering activities. Overall, the majority of

participants are engaged in some form of employment. Despite high rates being reported in these potential factors which limit free time, participants engage in volunteering, not only for Special Olympics but also, over half of participants also volunteer for other organisations. They also continue to volunteer for extended periods of time, as highlighted by the figure of 50.72% volunteering for more than six years.

In relation to volunteer motivation, it has been found that the majority of participants stated that being related to or knowing a Special Olympics athlete was not a motivating factor for them beginning to volunteer with Special Olympics. Furthermore, scoring of the CMQ showed that participants were intrinsically motivated with 'because I get a good feeling out of it' and 'because I enjoy the interaction I have with the athletes' consistently scoring the highest across all participating national programs. On the opposite end of the scale to this, 'I often think my volunteering efforts are a waste of time' and 'sometimes I don't know why I volunteer anymore' are consistently the lowest scoring statements across all participating National Programs thus suggesting a strong disagreement with the amotivation statements associated with a discontinuing of volunteer behaviour.

The results of the CMQ indicate a varying degree of significance in the results overall, between countries, and in comparison, to the CMQ average scores indicated through the validation studies conducted by McLean, Mallet & Newcombe (2012). Findings are significant ( $P \leq .05$ ) between countries on four of the six dimensions of SDT within the CMQ with only the dimensions at the opposite ends of the continuum; Intrinsic and Amotivation, showing results which are not significant. Furthermore, the results showed high levels of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .868$ ) suggesting similar ratings to those found within the CMQ validation studies as well as in studies conducted to develop Portuguese and German versions of the questionnaire. The implication of this is that it provides early indications that this questionnaire can provide a more cohesive data collection tool for the motivation of volunteers within the sports sector. The variety of volunteers within Special Olympics; both coaches and non-sporting volunteers, added a new factor as this questionnaire has previously only looked at coaches. Further studies are required to test and expand the usage of this questionnaire to determine its ability to measure the motivations of all volunteers within the sports sector.

By understanding the demographics and motivation of the volunteers within the organisation, it will be possible to focus recruitment and retention strategies as well as outlining the expertise and experience that volunteers can bring to the role to allow Special



Olympics to utilise these skills and knowledge for the benefit of Special Olympics and its athletes.

It is clear that Special Olympics as an organisation is very successful at recruiting and retaining a motivated volunteer base despite the difficulties faces in this area by many organisations. Their ability to cross over and attract people from all fields is vital for their continued success and is something that could be learned by other organisations. To strive in this sector, organisations must think about the bigger picture and not just sport. Special Olympics have done this extremely effectively through their promotion of social inclusion, health and sport. The Healthy Athlete program and Unified Sports program have aided this by opening up new avenues. The Health Athlete program allows Healthcare Professionals and people with an interest in this area to utilize their strengths and expertise and remain in their comfort zone. The Unified Sports program appeals to people with a desire to play sports and volunteer but who do not wish to undertake coaching roles. This is of particular interest to younger people hence the popularity of the Unified Schools strand of the program. This has helped Special Olympics reach their targets of youth volunteers numbers (Special Olympics, 2015; 2016).

Furthermore, the variety of training opportunities offered by Special Olympics is a key retention tool for the organisation. Whilst this will be discussed in greater detail in further chapters, it is important to consider how this impacts volunteer motivation. It may be argued that achieving or working towards personal goals; identified motivation, would be higher in volunteers utilizing the training on offer. This appears to be true within SO Ireland and SO Hellas volunteers in comparison to the CMQ average scores.

The other key recruitment and retention tool for Special Olympics is their athletes. The high levels of intrinsic motivation coupled with discussion throughout the survey on the positive experiences with the athletes seeking to empower athletes shows the power of the athletes to help the organisation grow. This indicates a level of altruism and touches on the philanthropic approach to disability where the innate human nature and desire to help people.

This chapter overall shows that Special Olympics volunteers come from a greater diversity of ages, gender, marital and employment status than other literature within the field. To grow their pool of potential volunteers, it is vital for organisations to gain an understanding of their appeal and how they can attract new people as well as also attracting people to a wider range of roles. Furthermore, organisations can learn from Special Olympics and their ability

to adapt and change to meet the needs of both their athletes and volunteers, for example through the development of the Health Athlete, Unified Sports and Young Athlete programmes. However, through this development, it is important to ensure the motives of the organisation remain consistent with the definition of a volunteer. Too much focus on the promotion of the organisation and what the organisation can do for the volunteer. As organisations attempt to 'sell' themselves to new volunteers they may risk removing the altruistic, intrinsically motivated element of the act of volunteering. We know that organisations promote the benefits in order to engage volunteers, however, this promotion must not take over from the true objective or mission of that organisation.

## Chapter 6: Volunteer Engagement & Cultural Variations

### 6.1 Introduction

As discussed in previous chapters, cultural differences play an important role in informing policy within psycho-social research and in particular within the sport sector. In order to enhance the volunteer experience and the satisfaction of volunteers, it is imperative that an organisation understands the level of engagement with the organisation that the volunteer seeks and also feels they currently experience. Therefore, this chapter aims to outline cultural similarities and variations found within the questionnaires issued to SO Hellas, SO Ireland and SO GB volunteers as well as the engagement with both the organisation and the research. Whilst statistical analysis conducted in chapter five breaks down the differences between participating National Program, this chapter will further assess these in relation to the potential cultural impact. Furthermore, additional areas such as volunteer engagement, recruitment, the impact of International Games and motivation will also be explored. Culturally, as has been previously discussed, Ireland (meaning the Island as a whole when referring to Special Olympics) and the Island of Great Britain, encapsulating England, Scotland and Wales, are strongly linked. For the purposes of this research, the Ulster region of Ireland was primarily used for data collection with the majority of volunteers coming from Northern Ireland which, along with England, Scotland and Wales form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This further suggests that strong cultural links between these two countries should exist. However, with its geographical location on the Mediterranean Sea, the Greek culture varies in many ways to the Irish and British cultures including social, economic and political variances amongst others.

Engagement of volunteers within the context of this thesis refers to the level of interaction with the organisation as a whole which ranges from their length of time with the organisation, their desire to be involved in aspects such as decision making and policies as well as their willingness to engage with this research. By understanding the desire of volunteers to engage with Special Olympics, the organisation can ensure strategies are implemented to complement and enhance the feelings of autonomy and connectedness experienced thus impacting the level of retention and the overall volunteer experience and satisfaction. As well as being an important element in its own right, as will be shown through this chapter, culture can play a role in the engagement of volunteers.

## 6.2 Cultural variations

### 6.2.1 Demographics

Demographical information collected through the questionnaire included, gender, age, marital status, dependents and employment status and sector. Throughout the data, there are some very interesting variations which suggest the presence of a factor influencing this, with culture being the predominant variable within this study.

The first difference in demographical factors which may be explained by cultural variations is gender. Whilst all participating National Programs showed high levels of female to male volunteers, the proportionality within SO Hellas was weighted significantly higher towards females than males. Additionally, similar differences have been highlighted in the ages of volunteers with SO Ireland and SO GB again showing similarities in comparison to SO Hellas with the older age ranges (50 – 64 year olds) more dominant within SO Ireland and SO GB and the 25 – 34 years age category the most prevalent within SO Hellas. This suggests that overall, the volunteer force is younger within the Mediterranean based climate of SO Hellas than their Northern European counterparts in Ireland and Great Britain. However, variation changes when looking at youth volunteering rates as these suggest the similarities exist between SO Ireland and SO Hellas and the rate within SO GB being slightly higher. This perhaps suggests differences other than culture impact the rates of youth volunteering. In comparison to the Special Olympics Reach Report, which shows that 41.7% of volunteers within the Europe Eurasia region are youth volunteers, the three participating National Programs had significantly lower results of only 12.43%. Whilst overall it can be seen that there are variations in the gender and age profile of volunteers across the participating cultures, other factors may also have a role to play and the difference with the values reported by Special Olympics for the rates of youth volunteers further reinforces the existence of other influences.

SO Hellas was founded in 1987 with both SO GB and SO Ireland founded in 1978. This in itself may have an impact on the age ranges in each National Program as shown in chapter five as SO Hellas has significantly less volunteers with more than ten years experience as a volunteer thus SO Ireland and SO GB volunteers are more likely to be older as some stated they have been with the organisation for over 30 years. It may also be possible to suggest that these countries vary on their social and political culture surrounding disability and disability sport. For example, the United Kingdom first introduced the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 with Ireland following with the Employment Equality Act in 1998 (Vanhala, 2015). However, the Law on the Application of the Principle of Equal Treatment was not introduced in Greece

until 2005 and SO Hellas was not recognised legally as a ratified Sports organisation in Greece until 2017 (specialolympics.org 2017). This may have acted as a barrier to volunteering due to a lower level of exposure to Special Olympics. It may also represent a generational shift similar to the paradigm shift from exclusion to inclusion (Barnes & Mercer, 2010) which may have occurred in Greece later than within Ireland or Great Britain. Longitudinal research within countries such as Greece would allow further analysis on whether this recognition for Special Olympics will impact the exposure of the organisation or subsequently, the demographics of the volunteers.

As shown within the literature, free leisure time can impact on the frequency of volunteering behaviours. The key demographical information collected which may impact the free leisure time of volunteers was marital status, dependents, employment and other volunteering commitments with the results of these shown in chapter five. Strong correlations were found in the number of single volunteers in SO GB and SO Ireland with SO Hellas volunteers significantly higher. Therefore subsequently, the reverse of this was seen for married volunteers with SO Hellas significantly lower than their Ireland and Great Britain counterparts. Culturally, this may appear surprising as the main religion in all three countries are variations of Christianity; Great Britain is Church of England, Ireland is Roman Catholic and Greece is Greek Orthodox and therefore may adopt similar view on marriage. This however does not appear to have an impact thus suggesting other factors may be impacting the lower marriage rates within SO Hellas. The ratios of volunteers with and without dependents does show a significant variation across countries. As SO Ireland and SO GB volunteers both showed similar levels of volunteers with dependents with SO Hellas volunteers significantly lower, as previously suggested, there may be links between the rates of single volunteers and those with no dependents. It must therefore be considered that a potential cause of these variations could be the cultural differences between the Northern European Irish and British culture and the Greek culture. Furthermore, the differences do not extend into the numbers of dependents per volunteer as SO GB volunteers with dependents have an average of 1.8 dependents, SO Hellas 1.18 and SO Ireland 1.12. These values are based on the number of volunteers who have dependents and not on the total number of respondents from each country. Therefore, the variations exist amongst dependents versus no dependents and not in the numbers of dependents they have. The links between lower numbers of volunteers with dependents and higher numbers of single volunteers in SO Hellas may indicate a link to religious beliefs. In 2015 (Greek consensus, 2015), it was shown that 90% of the Greek population recognised as Greek Orthodox which

outlines a firm belief that sex before marriage is a sin. Whilst this may also be found within the predominantly Christian beliefs within Ireland (78% in 2016) and Great Britain (59.5% in 2011), societal shifts and increased levels of single mothers may indicate less adherence to religious practices. If attempting to explain these findings based on religious cultures within participating countries, they appear to be contradictory in terms of disparity in the number of single and married volunteers and the similarities in volunteers with dependents. This postulation must be approached with caution as this research did not take religious beliefs into consideration during data collection, however, this is an interesting potential link which should be further explored. Additional contributory factors must influence these amongst Special Olympics volunteers which cause the variations and similarities between Greece, Ireland and Great Britain.

Another potential factor impacting the free leisure time of volunteers is their employment. Whilst no major variations were seen in employment and unemployment rates, the most significant factor which must be considered in terms of culture is the number of retired volunteers. Chapter five highlighted a lack of correlation between the number of retired volunteers and those aged 65+ within SO Hellas. There was however, a strong correlation on these figures amongst SO Ireland volunteers and SO GB volunteers. Further investigation on this would be required to ascertain potential reasons for these variations. Has the economic situation in Greece led to forced retirements at a younger age as we do know that traditionally the Greek population worked until later in life in comparison to their Irish and British counterparts (Trading economics 2017). The rate of self-employment amongst SO Hellas volunteers was found to be higher than both SO GB and SO Ireland volunteers who showed the lowest levels. Whilst one may postulate a connection between those seeking to create their own employment opportunities with an economic downturn, this research does not support this. Overall, financial or economic situations within a country may not be a contributing factor to the employment status of volunteers, however, further research would be required to support such findings. When comparing the average number of roles undertaken per volunteer with the demographics outlined there appears to be no relationship between factors impacting free leisure time and the roles undertaken. Lower marriage rates and lower numbers of dependents may indicate a higher level of free leisure time which has the potential to indicate the time spent volunteering. However, this appears to have the opposite impact on volunteers within SO Hellas who had the lowest average roles per volunteers. This again provides support for the earlier indications that social and economical differences do exist between SO Hellas and SO GB and SO Ireland.

Overall therefore it is clear to see that variations between participating National Programs do exist in relation to some of the key demographics. However, what is less clear is the role of culture within this as other factors may also play a role. The complexity of the volunteering sector is highlighted and the further complexities of volunteering within Special Olympics must also be considered as decisions to volunteer for Special Olympics may also be affected by familial connections through athletes and a desire to care for members of society who we deem to be more vulnerable than ourselves. Does this perception vary amongst or between cultures and if so, how does it impact volunteering behaviours? These questions raised further evidence the need for continuing research within this field of literature. In order to help address some of these questions, the reasons why volunteers undertake volunteering within Special Olympics and what role culture plays in this should therefore be addressed. What also must be considered is the presence of an additional culture. Does Special Olympics as a population create a sub culture that attracts a particular 'type' of person that may create more inter country similarities than what may exist in the more traditional pre-defined or existing cultures? The findings within this research in relation to demographics supports this theory. Whilst the evidence does suggest that some demographics do exist which may be influenced by culture, these results are too inconsistent to confirm that culture is the main contributory factor and that many other factors have a role to play including social and economic factors. This adds further support that Special Olympics creates a culture within the organisation which supersedes any between country effects of demographical variations therefore, the most significant culture effect is the organisation itself.

### 6.2.2 Motivation

As outlined in chapter five, motivation of volunteers was assessed within a Self Determination Theory framework using the Coach Motivation Questionnaire (McLean, Mallet & Newcomb, 2012). From a cultural perspective, it can be seen that SO Hellas volunteers were less likely to show a familial relationship than their SO GB and SO Ireland counterparts. Although all three participating National Programs showed an extremely high level of volunteers who were not motivated by knowing or being related to an athlete within Special Olympics, the role was significantly higher within SO Hellas volunteers thus suggesting the presence of a differentiating factor. The main contributory factors would be the hosting of an International Games and cultural variations. Both SO Hellas and SO Ireland have hosted the Special Olympics World Summer Games with volunteers in both programs indicating this as the time point they first registered as a volunteer. Furthermore, whilst SO GB has not hosted an International Special Olympics event, the legacy impact of the Olympic

Games in London 2012 and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014 has had a positive effect on the recruitment of Special Olympics volunteers. Therefore, the key factor involved is most likely to be culture. Also, as previously discussed, many cultural, social and economic similarities exist between Great Britain and Ireland which do not exist between these countries and SO Hellas. Whilst this may explain any variations in familial dependent motivation, further exploration of the Coach Motivation Questionnaire results to assess if this variation continues needs to be explored.

Chapter five highlights that overall Special Olympics volunteers rate their motivation more intrinsically than the validated scores of the CMQ. However, when further broken down, we can see some interesting differences between each National Program. Although not all results were statistically significant, SO Hellas volunteers consistently rated their motivation levels higher than their counterparts in SO Ireland and SO GB as shown in Table 5.7. This difference can be seen in the intrinsic, integrated, identified and introjected elements of the SDT continuum suggesting overall that SO Hellas volunteers are more inclined to continue to volunteer as they are more self-determined with increased levels of autonomy, connectedness and relatedness. When considered alongside volunteers intention to continue to volunteer with Special Olympics, which is discussed later in this chapter, there appears to be no link as SO Hellas volunteers intention is not statistically significantly different from SO Ireland or SO GB volunteers (*Figure 6.1*) The extrinsic forms of motivation; integrated, identified and introjected indicate that more factors, other than simply intrinsic factors impact volunteers decisions to undertake volunteering activities thus adding to the evidence base that motivation, and indeed motivation to volunteer is a complex, multifaceted issue.

External regulation shows more inconsistent results with SO Ireland scoring higher than the CMQ mean rating but both SO Hellas and SO GB scored lower. The lowest form of autonomous extrinsic motivation indicates behaviours take place due to a desire to receive rewards. The variation in results suggest that, unlike the previous forms of motivation, external regulation may not be impacted by cultural differences between participating National Programs. Finally, SO Hellas scored lower than both SO Ireland and SO GB on the amotivation statements of the CMQ, again not indicating any links with volunteers intention to continue to volunteer. It does suggest some differences existing between SO Hellas and SO Ireland and GB however, this is not statistically significant. The results of the comparison between Special Olympics volunteers and the CMQ validated studies show that Special Olympics volunteers score significantly lower in relation to amotivation. A lower score on



this scale shows a stronger level of disagreement with statements such as 'I often think my volunteering efforts are a waste of time' and 'Sometimes I don't know why I volunteer anymore'. The lower the score, the more likely the volunteer is to continue the voluntary act. The significant results here and the difference to non-Special Olympics volunteers support the presence of the culture of Special Olympics.

Overall it must be considered that for all factors of motivation, SO volunteers scored higher than the CMQ mean score with the exception of the least autonomous form; external regulation. Therefore, is there a culture of autonomy within Special Olympics volunteers that is higher than amongst volunteer sports coaches? Special Olympics volunteers are more inclined to be motivated by enjoyment, a desire to help and by activities that will increase their feelings of pride and confidence and less likely to be motivated by material rewards such as trophies. The latter point perhaps highlights the culture of social inclusion and participation for all as opposed to the potential competitiveness of the sports industry outside of Special Olympics. Some coaches may experience pressure, or at least a perceived pressure to obtain results, however, this is something not experienced by Special Olympics coaches and volunteers as all athletes who compete receive an award and some athletes choose not to compete at all but focus solely on the social element of Special Olympics. This culture of heightened levels of self-determined motivation also extends to amotivation where the Special Olympics volunteers scored lower than volunteer sports coaches studied by the CMQ. This suggests that Special Olympics volunteers are more likely to remain motivated and continue their volunteering behaviour than other voluntary sports coaching populations. Is this a culture created within the organisation of Special Olympics in comparison to other sports organisations? If so, are there lessons to be learned by other organisations in order to lower levels of amotivation and increase self-determined motivation thus increasing overall volunteer retention rates. The effectiveness of Special Olympics to create this culture can be of significant value to other organisations who are reliant on volunteers. Whilst some volunteers believe that improvements are needed within the organisation such as policy, communication etc, they are still motivated to remain as part of the organisation and continue volunteering. Other organisations need to create this culture despite the presence of challenges and improvements they need to make. This may be of particular challenge to organisations with more of a focus on sports and competition. When there is a focus on competition and subsequently on winning, it may prove more difficult for a culture or community to be developed between coaches and players who have pressures placed on them to win.

As already mentioned in this chapter, there are a number of both similarities and variations between countries which may be explained by cultural variations, however, these results are not significant and do lack a level of consistency which suggests that it may not be culture alone causing any variations. The overall results compared to the validated mean scores of the CMQ have shown a greater degree of significance thus strengthening the conclusion that the culture may be that which is created by the organisation as opposed to international cultures. Further research which incorporates more Special Olympics National Programs, more participants and also the addition of main stream sports volunteers is required to enhance this knowledge.

## 6.3 Volunteer Engagement

Key areas within this research that indicates the level of volunteer engagement include aspects of length of time volunteering with the organisation as well as the response rates of participating National Programs to the questionnaires. Maximising volunteer involvement within Third Sector Organisations and particularly within the voluntary sports sector, is vital for its success. The length of time involved with the organisation suggests higher retention rates thus decreasing the amount of time that staff and the organisation as a whole dedicate to recruitment of volunteers and increasing the overall efficiency. According to the Reach Report (2015) the number of full time paid staff within Special Olympics Europe Eurasia decreased between 2014 – 2015, and although a growth in the number of part-time employees during this period, it highlights the volatility of the financial situation within the voluntary and charity sector further highlighting the importance of maintaining a steady volunteer base. These figures were not provided within the 2016 Reach Report therefore more updated figures cannot be provided.

### 6.3.1 Length of time with the organisation

Overall, SO Ireland shows a significantly more experienced volunteer base, and whilst this varied across participating nations there is no evidence that this is caused by cultural differences as SO GB had a significantly lower level of experienced volunteers than both SO Hellas and SO Ireland. When broken down further, SO Hellas had the highest number of volunteers with 6 – 10 years' experience and SO GB had significantly more volunteers within the 1 - 3 years' experience category in the organisation. These timeframes appear to coincide with the hosting of the 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Athens and proceeding the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games and the Glasgow 2014

Commonwealth Games. A number of volunteers stated that they first registered *“before the 2011 World Games in Athens”* (SO Hellas volunteer) and how this was a positive experience that encouraged them to remain active as they got to *“work again with friends and colleagues that I have worked again (sic) during SOWSG Athens 2011”* (SO Hellas volunteer). Within SO GB, it appears that the legacy impact envisaged as part of the London 2012 Games and Glasgow 2014 Games has had a positive effect on SO GB as it has encouraged registration and volunteering with the organisation as *“After London 2012 I was sent an email..... and passing a long list of links leading to other organisations who needed volunteers, one of which was SOGB”* (SO GB volunteer). Whilst SO Ireland has hosted the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Dublin in 2003, the length of time passed means it is difficult to ascertain the potential impact of this, however, this may in part be the reason for the high number of volunteers with more than ten years volunteering within the organisation with some suggesting that *“its been a massive part of my life since 2003”* (SO Ireland volunteer). Therefore, we must ask the question as to whether or not legacy and the impact of hosting a major International Sporting event is a better predictor of volunteering behaviour than culture. The impact of legacy is a growing area of debate within the literature which was brought to prominence by the legacy commitments made by the London 2012 Games Organising Committee. The evidence provided here supports the existence of legacy as a result of International Sporting Events and indicates that organisations should maximise these opportunities to help garner the desire to volunteer amongst the general public. Organisations need to prepare strategies to immediately follow such a major event to ensure volunteers are aware of the opportunities that exist via email, media and social media. They must also ensure that these opportunities encompass a range of functional areas; sport, media, administration etc and also a range of geographical locations thus removing this as a barrier to volunteering and increasing the conversion from episodic event volunteer to long term volunteer.

### 6.3.2 Engagement in research

Engagement in this research varied extensively amongst participating National Programs. In relation to data collection methods, for the purposes of data protection, no contact details were provided to the researcher. All requests for participation were sent directly by a staff member within the organisation, within the Special Olympics Ulster region of SO Ireland there are 3125 registered on the volunteer database who were sent the original email communication. Of these 926 returned as failed to deliver leaving 2199 volunteers receiving the email. A total of 212 volunteers responded to the initial email equating to a response

rate of 9.64% with 154 of these responses occurring within the first 48 hours of the survey email being sent. This immediate response may indicate a good level of engagement from SO Ireland volunteers. This differed significantly from the recruitment of participants and response rates from both SO Hellas and SO GB. Statistics provided by SO GB show a total of 3391 active volunteers. Initial contact and promotion of the research was by inclusion of a link to the online survey in the quarterly volunteer newsletter which was sent to all volunteers regardless of level of activity, although accurate data on the overall numbers was not provided. However, this yielded a response of only six volunteers. Therefore, a second attempt at contact was made via email, which again only returned seven responses. Further email attempts gained eight, one and eleven responses respectively. The most successful form of participant recruitment within SO GB was a post on SO GB's social media site on Facebook with an invitation to take part. This yielded 17 responses leaving a total of 50 participants. This link remained active to allow volunteers to respond at any time, however, once it moved down the timeline of the social media page behind other posts, it did not receive any further interaction or response. These 50 participants came from both active and inactive volunteers meaning that the response rate cannot be determined using the figure of 3391 provided by SO GB as this referred to active volunteers. It may be argued that the difficulty in recruitment for the research may indicate a lower level of engagement from the volunteers. Multiple email attempts with SO Hellas volunteers were more successful than those by SO GB. A total of five emails resulted in 150 responses with the initial email yielding 29 responses and subsequent emails yielding 31, 57, 7 and 26 respectively. The exact response rate of this is more difficult to determine as the true number of volunteers within SO Hellas is more unclear.

Furthermore, it is also important to consider who engaged with the research. Across all participating National programs, the rate of youth volunteers; aged 16 – 24 was significantly lower than the true rates of registered youth volunteers as reported by the Special Olympics Reach Reports (2015, 2016). This shows that youth volunteers were less engaged in the research than other volunteers. For a continuous supply of new volunteers and to ensure the long-term success of the organisation, it is important to continually bring in new, young volunteers and to do this, organisations must understand how to encourage these volunteers to engage to a greater degree. It may be possible that youth volunteers do not engage as they feel they are not experience enough to be able to contribute or perhaps may feel intimidated knowing the experience of older volunteers. Alternatively, this may have been due to youth volunteers being less likely to respond to email requests. It is important to

consider the possible ambiguity of youth volunteers who consider themselves to be volunteers. The role of playing partner within Unified Sports is fulfilled by volunteers, and predominantly by youth volunteers as part of the Unified Schools program. It is possible that many volunteers consider themselves to be athletes or players and not volunteers within this role thus leading to them not identifying as such for the purposes of this research. The key recommendation for both organisations and researchers is to consider the data collection tools utilised to ensure the maximum possible response rate for a true representative sample across research. Additionally, by engaging more with young volunteers, organisations including Special Olympics can understand the needs of this volunteer subgroup and adapt their policies accordingly.

### 6.3.3 Active volunteers

One pertinent question relating to engagement is the level of active volunteers i.e. those who have taken part in any capacity in the previous twelve months including club sessions, competitions, health promotion events or fundraising. All three participating National Programs had extremely high levels of participants who identified as being active. SO Hellas had the highest activity rate of 86.67% followed by 84.78% and 75.94% in SO GB and SO Ireland respectively. Whilst this indicates strong levels of activity amongst volunteers in all three programs and perhaps therefore high levels of volunteer retention, the term 'inactive volunteer' suggests that research must consider the potential skewing of this data caused by inactive volunteers not taking part in research. This in itself is a challenge that must be overcome by researchers in order to gain a true picture of the rates of active volunteers. Voluntary organisations should utilise the information available to them regarding volunteer registration information and activity and encourage inactive volunteers to engage with the organisation to advise them on reasons for inactivity. This may allow them to develop their strategies to remove these reasons and barriers thus leading to a decrease in attrition rates. Currently within Special Olympics, there appears to be no mechanism or process in place to do this yet this is a vital tool to aid improvement and volunteer retention. Efficiency would improve if volunteers were encouraged to become active again rather than having to replace these with volunteers who had to go through the registration, vetting and induction processes. Those who stated they were inactive, were asked to identify the reason or reasons for their inactivity from a choice of options including work commitments, family commitments, lack of opportunities in their area, lack of interest, it was a one-off event, they did not enjoy the experience or other (please specify).

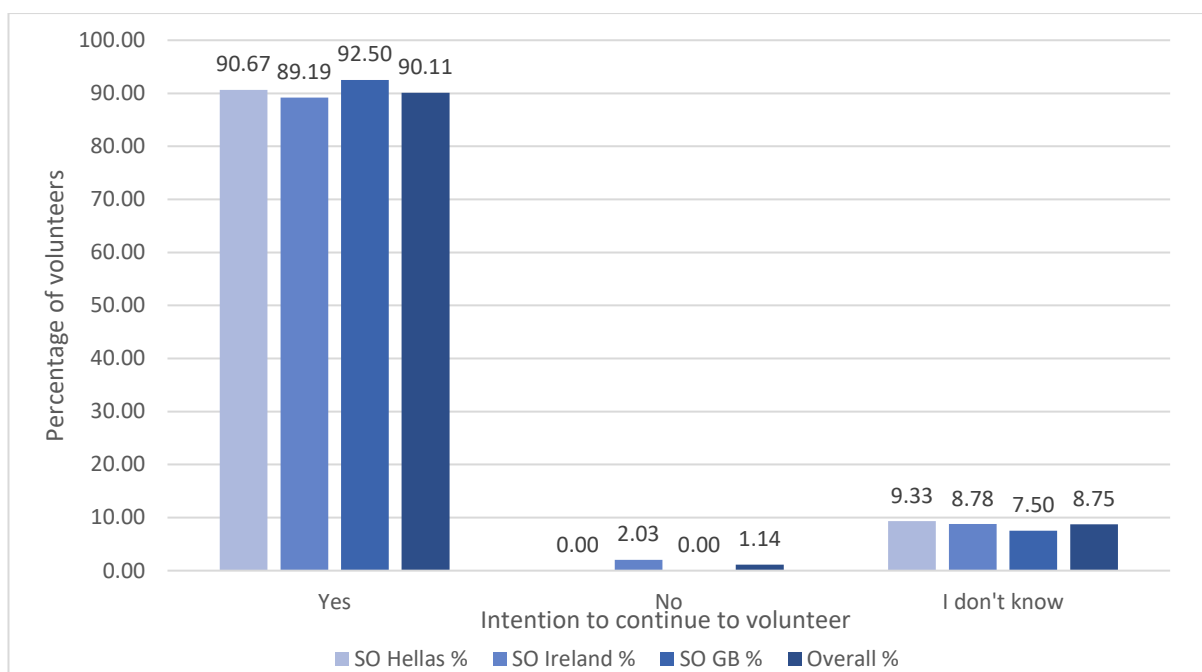
The most common reasons for not currently being an active volunteer varied across each participating National Program. SO Ireland participants indicated family commitments as the main reason with 34.15% (14). However, both SO Hellas and SO GB [33.33% (5) & 42.86% (3)] rated work commitments as the most common reason for inactivity. As stated in the previous chapter, 46.24% of SO Ireland volunteers had dependents which may be related to the level of those with family commitments although this is in contradiction to the findings from SO GB where no volunteers stated family commitments for their inactivity despite having a similar level of dependants [44.44% (20)] as their Irish counterparts. Within SO Ireland, 24.39% (10) of inactive volunteers indicated other reasons yet on further analysis, four of these stated *“unable to find groups within my area to volunteer with”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *“not asked”* (SO Ireland volunteer) as their reason which, when added to the lack of opportunities category, increases this to 19.57% (8). This was similar to the 20.00% (3) within SO Hellas who felt they had a lack of opportunity. These figures provide information to National Programs as a way of improving retention rates of volunteers who felt they were no longer required. Furthermore, understanding why volunteers are no longer active will allow the organisation to adapt the roles undertaken by the volunteers and potentially develop new, more flexible roles that are suited to the modern volunteer who leads a busy life and has many commitments vying for their time thus impacting on their free time available for volunteering behaviours.

The geography of each program and its rural and urban spread should also be considered. Ireland and parts of Great Britain have large areas of agricultural land with strong farming communities. This poses challenges to programs such as Special Olympics as there may be volunteers or indeed athletes within these areas who cannot be accessed in a cost efficient manner. If there is an interest to volunteer within this area, it may be aided by the hosting of major sporting events which provides unique opportunities to become involved, however these volunteers are then more likely to become inactive due to the more rural areas they live. A similar situation exists for SO Hellas due to the number of Greek Islands which was highlighted by participants who stated *“on the Ionian Islands, it is still difficult to contact parents with children with intellectual disabilities”* and *“I am living in an island in Greece. There were not programs of Special Olympics”* (SO Hellas volunteers). To ascertain the potential impact of this, or indeed if there are opportunities to grow into more rural areas, feasibility studies may need to be undertaken by each National Program. As highlighted in chapter two, transport can be a barrier to participation in sport or physical activity for people with disabilities, however, this may also be an issue for volunteers, particularly in rural areas

who struggle to get to clubs and training to perform volunteering duties. This issue has been overcome by some clubs by fundraising for minibuses which are used as a transport service for athletes and volunteers allowing them to participate. Whilst this may be a large undertaking for clubs, the organisation could perhaps provide support to those looking to do this. Additionally, greater collaboration between volunteer led organisations and individual clubs could promote greater inclusion through joint initiatives providing services such as this.

Whilst these areas suggest potential ways in which they can improve their retention rates, it is also important to highlight a major positive in what the organisation does that encourages volunteer engagement i.e. enjoyment. Two options given as potential reasons for why a volunteer is not currently active were a lack of interest and that they did not enjoy the experience. Across the three participating National Programs, no volunteers provided either of these as the reason for their inactivity which suggests that if they had the time or were aware of opportunities then they were happy to volunteer due to enjoying the experience. This is further evidenced through the high levels of those indicating their desire and intention to continue volunteering with Special Olympics. As can be seen in *Figure 6.1*, only 1.14% (3) volunteers suggested they will no longer volunteer for Special Olympics and on further investigation the reasons given for this are in no way related to the organisation but are solely for personal reasons beyond the control of Special Olympics; one volunteer had *“to (sic) many other commitments”* (SO Ireland volunteer), another felt they were too old to contribute whilst the final stated that they *“travel quite a bit now and the dates don’t always suit – we don’t like to commit too far in advance”* (SO Ireland volunteer). This may however provide further support for the earlier point that more flexible volunteer roles may encourage busy volunteers to remain involved. One off roles at events may suit these individuals therefore the National Programs should ensure these opportunities are advertised to all volunteers.

As also shown in *Figure 6.1*, 8.75% (23) were unsure of their future volunteering intentions and again, there was no indication of the organisation influencing or causing this decision with available time being the primary reason given; *“I am not sure I will have the necessary time in the future”* (SO Hellas volunteer), *“if the days required fit in around other outside family commitments I would be happy to help out”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *“As long as I am able, I will continue”* (SO GB volunteer).



**Figure 6.1** Volunteers intention to continue to volunteer for Special Olympics per country and overall

There is no significant difference between the rates of intentions to continue to volunteer across each of the National Programs with the overall figure showing 90.11% (237). The enjoyment and the positive experience along with the athletes themselves who add substantially to the overall experience of the volunteers are the primary contributors to decisions to continue volunteering with comments such as *“why wouldn’t I (continue), the athletes are amazing and I love the fun I have when I’m there”* (SO GB volunteer), *“I can’t imagine my life away from the athletes. It’s a way of life”* (SO Hellas volunteer) and that volunteers *“love the experience I get with being involved with the athletes”* (SO Ireland volunteer).

A theme that also appears to carry across cultures is the level of autonomy with the organisation and a desire to seek and maintain a deeper contribution. This applies to both to the organisation; recognising the contribution the organisation as a whole makes to the athletes, and to society; *“I feel that volunteer work has an effect on the society and promotes Human Rights. Moreover, the organisation offers an excellent environment for its volunteers”* (SO Hellas volunteers); *“I believe that the work being completed by the organisation is wonderful, and worthwhile to all involved”* and *“the best way to effect change is from within an organisation”* (SO Ireland volunteer), *“I don’t leave a job unfinished”* (SO Ireland volunteer). Self Determination Theory outlines the need for autonomy, connectedness and



relatedness and it is clear from these results that Special Olympics has created an environment which enhances the feelings of autonomy and connectedness thus allowing and encouraging volunteers to engage with the organisation in a meaningful manner. However, the connectedness to particular individuals has the potential to cause some volunteers to become disengaged with the organisation. Within SO GB volunteers, two volunteers indicated that they will leave once their son or another volunteer leaves: *“as long as my son continues to enjoy training and competition with SO I will continue to volunteer”* (SO GB volunteer), *“I will (continue to volunteer) for as long as my local chairperson needs me. Once she leaves I shall follow”* (SO GB volunteer). Whilst this is a small sample expressing these views two questions must be asked:

1. Can Special Olympics lower the attrition rate of volunteers by increasing the autonomy of this group of volunteers to the organisation?
2. How can the relationship between athletes and volunteers impact volunteering behaviour?

An interesting consideration to be made from this is that only SO GB volunteers expressed these views. Does this indicate a unique variation not seen within SO Ireland and SO Hellas? Further research into the motivations of volunteers would allow a more indepth analysis of the autonomy, connectedness and relatedness of volunteers to determine if variations exist across programs with qualitative research showing potential reasons for these variations.

#### 6.3.4 Decision making

Organisational involvement is a broad term that may encompass many areas, however, for the purposes of this study it is used to outline the potential for involvement within the organisations structures and decision making that volunteers not only believe they have but would like to have or what they believe volunteers should have. This provides an overall picture of the level of engagement volunteers want to achieve within Special Olympics which will in turn allow Special Olympics to better understand how they can enhance this level. The dominant opinion across the three participating National Programs is that volunteers have the ability to make decisions at a club level but this ability diminishes as the organisational level increases; *“I am always free to voice my opinion...”* (SO Hellas volunteer), *“at club level, we have plenty of open discussions and people are willing to listen to ideas and suggestions”* (SO GB volunteer), *“locally yes. At national level banging head against brick wall”* (SO GB volunteer). However, one issue is that the encouragement to engage volunteers is inconsistent. There is a belief amongst a minority that they have no input in the decision-

making process within Special Olympics and this appears to be a source of frustration and amotivation for these volunteers: *“Absolutely not! These persons are specified and this is very annoying (sic). Beyond the 2 – 3 persons that organise the hall (sic) organisation, there is a small clique (friends mostly) that is including everywhere!!!”* (SO Hellas volunteer), *“I feel our club is disengaged and disconnected not only with other clubs but with SO as an organisation”* (SO Ireland volunteer), *“SO central need to listen more to people on the ground when organising and time table in events”* (SO Ireland volunteer); *“I felt rather excluded and didn’t have enough autonomy”* (SO GB volunteer). From the use of words such as disengaged, disconnected and excluded show that the current structure and running of the organisations may be causing some volunteers to become amotivated and subsequently increasing their volunteer attrition rates. It is pertinent to state here that only a relatively small proportion of volunteers expressed these views of disengagement, however it represents an opinion that can have lasting, negative consequences for any organisation which relies heavily on volunteers.

Another area to be discussed in further detail in the next chapter is communication and it is clear that some volunteers feel there is something lacking in relation to the working relationship between the clubs and the organisation which needs to be improved. This has led to some volunteers feeling that they are not listened to when they are the people who can see what needs to be done on the ground with the athletes. However, this in itself shows the discrepancies in communication and working relationships as it may be that some volunteers are not aware of the wider picture of the whole organisation. The general consensus outlined that volunteers felt they had autonomy over decisions made at club level but not at other levels within the organisation.

When asked about their level of engagement in the decision-making process, there appears to be a level of inferiority complex amongst some volunteers as they feel it is not their place to have any input into the organisation and how it is run. This inferiority complex transcends a variety of roles and relationships and occurs for different reasons. Volunteers may have the perception that due to the role they play, they can’t have an input into decision making with one sports official suggests that they *“can’t really comment as my key role is sports official/ operations manager for events”* (SO Ireland volunteer). These comments came only from SO Ireland volunteers with no SO Hellas or SO GB volunteers feeling that their role has impacted on their ability or right to be more engaged with their decision-making process. However, whilst they haven’t elaborated on the roles they have undertaken a SO Hellas volunteer did highlight they felt *“it is not my role”*. This leads to further questions of whether

there are structural differences in the National Programs that have led to a perceived hierarchy of volunteers. Each program must recognise how they can utilize their structure in order to ensure volunteers feel valued and listened to. It is also important to ensure within these structures that all roles are incorporated. For example, sports officials can and do play a vital role in the development of a sport by advising on rules and competition structures. Better outlining the ways sports officials can influence the organisation may allow for greater engagement. Often, roles such as Sports Officials take the form of episodic volunteering and there may be a lack of cross over to longer terms roles. However, Special Olympics have encouraged this cross over effectively as the average number of roles per volunteer undertaken by Sports Officials is 3.4 roles. It is not clear if there is a cause effect relationship here as role specification did not acknowledge if the volunteer trained to become a Sports Official or if the Sports Officials undertook other roles, although the most likely is a combination of these. Both of these options indicate strengths of the organisation in training and developing volunteers to perform other roles. This provides another example of how the organisation develops a level of connectedness and loyalty that helps promote the development of its volunteers.

Similar to how the role of the volunteer impacts their engagement in the decision-making process is their length of time volunteering and their perceived level of knowledge and expertise. Length of time involved was more of an issue for SO GB volunteers who suggested *"I've not been involved long enough"* and *"I haven't been involved long enough to have much of an opinion on this"*. Yet, the knowledge and experience of the volunteers was highlighted more so by SO Hellas as *"I do not feel that I have the knowledge to influence the decisions of the organisation"* and SO Ireland volunteers where *"there are opportunities to be involved in decision making as a volunteer, but only after a great deal of time and experience has been accumulated"*.

Furthermore, as a volunteer led organisation with a team of full and part time paid staff, who therefore is the most entitled and best placed to make decisions; staff or volunteers? The inferiority complex of some volunteers continued into this area of comparison with staff as SO Ireland volunteers suggested that *"being just a volunteer I have no input in decision making"* and that *"I personally do not interfere with the operational side of things"*. The use of words such as 'just a volunteer' and 'interfere' highlight that volunteers may adopt an approach of just doing as they are told and allowing others to make the decisions as they *"mostly just follow instructions"* (SO Ireland volunteer) and are *"just there to help"* (SO Hellas). This can also follow through in their feelings that they can make decisions *"as long*

*as the hierarchy agree*” (SO GB volunteer). SO Hellas volunteers were more likely to indicate that they felt *“volunteers don’t have the level of responsibility employees have”* and *“the final decision should be from the persons who has the responsibilities”* (SO Hellas volunteer).

Overall, this can strongly impact the feeling of autonomy a volunteer experiences in relation to their level of engagement possible within the decision-making process and this lack of autonomy can lead to a negative experience as they had been *“made to feel lowest level of involvement”* (SO Ireland volunteer). The negative impressions of some SO Ireland volunteers suggests a desire to seek more autonomy and more responsibility in relation to making decisions yet SO Hellas volunteers were more likely to be comfortable with allowing staff to be the key decision makers. Expressing their opinion and wanting to achieve this deeper level of engagement can possibly be attributed to the cultural differences between Ireland and Greece however there is a lack of supporting evidence to the effect from SO GB volunteers to substantiate this potential finding. An indication of the desire to engage meaningfully with the organisation by SO GB volunteers may be their willingness to suggest improvements or ways forward including *“maybe some working groups/ committees on certain things would be good”* (SO GB volunteer). This may help involve more volunteers and lower some of the feelings of isolation from those involved at National level.

Despite the somewhat negative experiences outlined, these views are a minority with the overall consensus amongst volunteers from the three participating National Programs being that they have a good level of engagement and can impact on decision making as they *“were emailed to ask for feedback on their strategic plan”* (SO GB volunteer) and that *“I made some proposals and they are in the progress to complete (sic)”* (SO Hellas volunteer). The role the volunteer undertakes does appear to impact this as *“As an event manager I had an input in how the event was managed”* (SO Ireland volunteer). However, these role specific areas of input, whilst to some can cause feelings of disengagement, are viewed as a positive by others with the main advice being that if volunteers have the knowledge and experience to do so, then they should have the opportunity provided it doesn’t hinder the decision-making process as too many voices *“may complicate (the) process”* (SO Hellas volunteer). The rationale provided across the participants for ensuring volunteer engagement is due to volunteers being in regular contact with athletes and seeing things that others may not see. The fact that volunteers *“are the ones on the ground working with the athletes”* (SO Ireland volunteer) imparts a perceived ability to add value to the organisation if they are provided the opportunity to engage.

One final thought that stands out in relation to decision making within the organisation is that *“the athletes should be more empowered with decisions. The SO (sic) is about the athlete”* (SO Ireland volunteer). This highlights that regardless of their own opinions on what decisions they should be able to make, the focus of volunteers remains on the athletes. Volunteers want the opportunity to engage but recognise that ensuring the athletes ability to engage takes precedence. The social inclusion and empowerment of people with Intellectual Disabilities forms an integral part of the philosophy of Special Olympics, however, with a variety of volunteers with various key motivations, as shown in chapter five, it can be seen that this ethos carries through beyond these motives. The volunteers are of the belief that the athletes are the priority and must be involved in order to aid this.

### ‘6.3.5 Central’

A recurring theme within the results is a largely negative feeling towards head office or ‘central’ as it has been dubbed by some. The connotations of this word appear to be synonymous with control and a feeling of discord as *“the organisation has become very centred on head office and everything is done for the convenience of those living in the greater London area”* (SO GB volunteer). This appears to extend throughout the volunteering process right from recruitment, training and long-term involvement. In some cases, problems were experienced during the recruitment process as there were *“some issues with Dublin HQ not doing things required of them in a timely manner”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and that *“it was a bit drawn out with having to go to get verified at a police station and the process then going to Dublin”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and that *“we had to travel to Dublin for training which was a it(sic) too far to have to go for a few hours training which mostly could have been done closer to home”* (SO Ireland volunteer). In relation to the organisation as a whole *“SO Central need to listen more to people on the ground when organising and time table in events as..... more events are needed to keep athletes motivated and the SO offices should be more proactive on this front”* (SO Ireland volunteer). Furthermore, an SO GB volunteer suggested that *“Head office can be autocratic”* and that *“I have had negative experiences when contacting the London office, they are not always helpful and sometimes can be rude in the way they reply to emails”* (SO GB volunteers). There are two key points that need to be addressed in regards to this

1. All volunteers who spoke in a negative manner on the ‘central’ office issue were from SO Ireland and SO GB with no participants from SO Hellas suggesting this.

2. Whilst one or two comments directly mention staff in a negative light, this is primarily in relation to head office as the predominant viewpoint in relation to staff is positive as *“I know the staff do a great job maybe using volunteers more would help”* (SO GB volunteer) and that *“it a(sic) great to see what is available for those with intellectual disabilities and to see the great work that the staff and volunteers do”* (SO Ireland volunteer).

The rapport between the staff and the volunteers is strong and *“there is good crack (sic) with staff and athletes and always good atmosphere”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *“I have only ever had positive experiences from staff, volunteers and athletes. This is a sentiment expressed not only by SO Ireland volunteers but also those from SO Hellas: “it is always fun, with great volunteers, athletes and SOH staff”* and SO GB volunteers suggesting that *“staff do a good job”*.

Of the three participating programs, SO Ireland is the largest. It is also the one that has shown the highest level of discord between the hierarchy of staff, particularly at ‘Central’ level and the volunteers. Could this be a consequence of the faster growth of the program? A rapid growth rate and large numbers of both athletes and volunteers may result in a more disjointed approach that has caused a gap in communication resulting in discord amongst some volunteers. This may also explain a point to be discussed further in chapter seven; the workload of staff. Volunteers recognised that staff worked hard and developed a strong rapport with clubs and volunteers. However, further development within this area is required to ensure gaps in the processes are closed to create better links between clubs and the ‘Central’ offices of National Programs. Involving volunteers in the structure and running of the organisation and also in the dissemination of information i.e. through volunteer forums would improve this area whilst also aiding other areas outlined earlier in this chapter. The ability of Special Olympics to create a sense of culture and community has already been alluded to yet it is essential for the development of long term volunteering. Whilst overall, Special Olympics has been extremely successful and effective at doing this, they must continue to promote this culture and ensure that the structures put in place to aid growth do not hinder the sense of community and relationships.

## 6.4 Conclusions

This chapter indicates that cultural variations exist between volunteers within the Special Olympics National Programs who participated in this study; SO Ireland, SO GB and SO Hellas.

However, it must be noted that these variations were inconsistent as they applied to some demographics but not to others thus highlighting the importance of furthering research within this field with the intention of fully understanding who volunteers for Special Olympics, why and how the organisation and volunteers engage. The one consistent element across all volunteers and each National Program is the positivity both towards, and about the athletes. The overall volunteer experience was greatly enhanced by the interactions they had with the athletes and indeed this filtered through to their levels of engagement and desire to stay involved in the organisation, and also to their opinions on decision making where there was the suggestion that the question should not be whether or not volunteers should have more power, it is more about the athletes having more power and say over the running of the organisation.

The cultural climate created by this engagement with athletes and the organisation appears to be key to the retention rates of Special Olympics volunteers and how Special Olympics perhaps differs from their peers within other areas of the voluntary sector. The more self-determined nature of Special Olympics volunteers in comparison to volunteer coaches within the study of the CMQ indicates an increased likelihood of those volunteers remaining with the organisation. This hypothesis was supported by the 57.18% of volunteers who have previously volunteered for organisations other than Special Olympics but no longer do so. Whilst work and family commitments and it being a one-off event remained the primary reason for this, there was a total of 12 volunteers who stated a lack of interest or enjoyment as a key factor. Therefore, is there an implication that volunteer satisfaction and experience is more synonymous with Special Olympics than other areas of the voluntary sector? This in itself raises many questions in relation to increasing volunteer retention rates and suggests that perhaps a more co-ordinated response to improve volunteer experiences and satisfaction will create a positive impact on volunteer engagement and autonomy with an organisation. The positive cultural climate created within Special Olympics appears to indicate this, however it is important that research in this field is furthered to gain a better understanding of this. This chapter provides evidence for the suggestion that within this European context, Special Olympics as a culture appears to transcend the culture within each individual National Program. Whilst some variations exist that may be explained by cultural differences, the inconsistencies here perhaps indicate a more complex set of factors impacting on inter and intra country variation. It is imperative to expand this research to include non-European countries to determine if this hypothesis is true of Special Olympics as a world-wide organisation as larger cultural variations may exist across continents.

Therefore, this needs to be considered within volunteer policies and organisational strategies for multinational organisations.

Overall, the summation of findings and analysis provided in this chapter outlines to overarching points:

1. The culture and sense of community within Special Olympics is of paramount importance to the success of the organisation and is something that should be considered by other multi-national sports organisations. Without this, levels of autonomy, loyalty and intrinsic motivation amongst volunteers will be lower.
2. Transparency of processes and opportunities for volunteer engagement is required. Whilst Special Olympics have many of these opportunities, there are inconsistencies in the experiences and knowledge of these amongst volunteers which in turn has led to lower levels of satisfaction.



## Chapter 7: Policy awareness & strategy

### 7.1 Introduction

After gaining more of an understanding of who volunteers for Special Olympics, why they volunteer, how they engage or wish to engage with the organisation and also the culture that this creates, it is also important to understand how this may fit in with the policies and strategies of the organisation. The viewpoint and perceptions of the volunteers and the staff may differ in relation to the policies currently in place, how these are delivered and implemented and what they should consist of. This chapter therefore aims to outline how volunteers perceive the policies, procedures and strategies within Special Olympics and how they feel this could be altered or enhanced to improve the overall volunteer experience, satisfaction and retention rates. Furthermore, in order to assess if overall conclusions can be developed, this chapter will incorporate the perceptions of staff to understand what the organisation currently does in relation to volunteer management and what their key areas of development are.

Key policy areas discussed as part of this research included recruitment, communication and building the volunteer experience and how volunteers fitted within this. It is acknowledged that there is a lack of volunteer policies and strategies currently within the National Programs, however, interviews with staff have shown a desire to change this with there currently being active engagement in the process of policy development in each of the programs. Therefore, this research has the ability to provide key insights into this area to help inform the practices of Special Olympics, and in particular, SO Hellas, SO Ireland and SO GB.

### 7.2 Recruitment

As recruitment is often the first experience many people have within an organisation, it is vital that this is a positive experience to aid retention rates. Therefore, volunteers were asked to outline their experiences and impressions of the recruitment process whilst the relevant staff were also asked to discuss any procedures and structures they have in place pertaining to this.

The key finding regarding recruitment is the disparity in experiences amongst volunteers caused primarily by their decision to volunteer in the build up to a games period or during the intervening periods between games. As shown within the literature, a major sporting event can often attract large numbers of applications for one off voluntary positions. (GCG

Report, 2014). Special Olympics as an organisation also required the same, for example, SO Ireland recently recruited 2500 volunteers for their National Games for Dublin 2018 whilst SO GB recruited 900 volunteers and officials for their 2017 National Games in Sheffield and the process of recruitment of the 20,000 volunteers required for the 2019 World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi is underway. This is reflected in the findings with volunteers across the three participating National Programs stating that they first volunteered at one of the major sporting events hosted by Special Olympics within their home country; specifically, the 2011 World Summer Games in Athens and the 2003 World Summer Games in Dublin and the 2006 Ireland National Games in Belfast. SO GB appears to be slightly different, only one volunteer stated they first volunteered at a major Special Olympics event; 2013 National Games in Bath. Having never hosted an International Special Olympics event, it may be possible to postulate that SO GB has not yet had the opportunity to utilize the effective recruitment tool that appears to be an International event. However, it can be noted that there may be a legacy impact from the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics Games with some volunteers stating that *“After London 2012 I was sent an email to say thank you..... and passing a long list of links leading to other organisations who needed volunteers, one of which was SOGB”* (SO GB volunteer). Therefore, countries who have not hosted an international Special Olympics games face a challenge to utilize whatever recruitment tools available in order to promote the organisation. National and International events provide a unique promotional opportunity through media and advertising campaigns to increase the profile of the organisation, what they do and the role of both volunteers and athletes. The legacy impact of using a co-ordinated approach with other organisations hosting events such as an Olympics Games, as SOGB have done, may be an effective way of overcoming this challenge. Within the cycle of Special Olympics, National and International events only take place once every four years although volunteer recruitment must take place all year round throughout the four-year cycle thus further emphasizing the importance of developing links with other organisations who can provide this joint venture to recruit volunteers like that used after the London 2012 Olympics Games.

This, in part, may explain the inconsistent views of volunteers regarding their experiences of recruitment. Some have outlined an extremely positive experience as it was *“relatively straight forward”* (SOGB volunteer), *“well organised”* and *“very efficient, fast and straightforward”* (SO Ireland volunteers). The personal touch experienced by some highlights what was discussed in chapters five and six in relation to the familial or community experience that keeps volunteers engaged as volunteers felt *“I was welcomed in a big family”*

(SO Hellas volunteer). It is interesting to note that SO Hellas volunteers are more inclined to look at their experience in this manner than their Irish or British counterparts who focused more on the organisation of the process itself. This does not suggest that SO Ireland or SO GB volunteers do not experience this connection as this has proved to be a recurring theme throughout the research. However, this may add further to the complexity of the cultural variations debate outlined in chapter six or it may also suggest that SO Ireland and SO GB are at a different stage of growth and development to SO Hellas caused by both SO GB and SO Ireland being in their 40<sup>th</sup> year and SO Hellas in their 30<sup>th</sup> year. Also, SO Hellas has only recently (2017) gained the recognition of the Greek government as a sports club. Prior to this, it may be argued that the lack of recognition may have led to lower levels of attention in the media, less support from funders or indeed less acknowledgement by potential volunteers.

Despite the positivity of the majority of the volunteers experiences, as mentioned, there are some inconsistencies with the process being described as *“Long!!!!!! (sic)”* (SO Ireland volunteer), *“wasn’t organised well”* (SO Hellas) and *“was a little confusing”* (SO GB volunteer). Part of the issue is that the recruitment process outside of the major games time frame is more ad hoc as volunteers highlighted that they were simply *“recruited by a friend”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *“I knew several of the people involved in setting (the club) up..... more a question of ‘here’s the dates..... Come along’”* (SO GB volunteer). One issue faced by staff is that new volunteer applications are lodged on a daily or weekly basis and therefore there is a continual cycle of processing applications which not only is time consuming for staff but can lead to delays for the volunteer (SO GB staff and SO Ireland staff). In some cases this has led to the confusion and feelings of frustration expressed by volunteers with the *“length of time it took to wait for the final stage was somewhat off putting”* (SO Ireland volunteer) as *“at times (it was) too long”* (SO GB volunteer). The main area of frustration expressed in relation to the length of time was the background checking and waiting on processes to be completed as it was *“drawn out – some issues with Dublin HQ not doing things required of them in a timely manner”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and that *“they did not explain many things to the people”* (SO Hellas volunteer).

The volunteer induction provided as part of the recruitment process also appears to vary depending on when volunteers register and the National Program. A number of SO Hellas volunteers mentioned having an interview that made the process feel more personalised to that individual as it didn’t *“fell (sic) like I am interviewed! It felt I was welcomed in a big family”* (SO Hellas volunteer) and *“it was a very pleasant procedure in a quiet office with 2*

*(sic) very friendly Special Olympics employees*” (SO Hellas volunteer). However, one negative experience in relation to having an interview stated that *“most of the recruitment managers not experienced to evaluet the volunteers (sic)”* (SO Hellas volunteer). This raises the possibility that whilst interviews can provide an excellent experience for volunteers there may be the need to administer training for those conducting the interviews. Being trained in this role would enable volunteers to do this, thus taking pressure off staff to co-ordinate other duties.

A *“necessary administrative process”* (SO Ireland volunteer) outlined by both SO Ireland and SO GB volunteers as an area that can be confusing and frustrating is the police checks and vetting prior to assuming a volunteering role, however, this was not mentioned by SO Hellas volunteers. It was suggested that the recruitment process as a whole was straightforward *“apart from the AccessNI check which required going to a Police station”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and that *“Registration was prolonged and involved extra calls and too much labour on DBS application”* (SO GB volunteer). SO Ireland and SO GB staff have confirmed that the majority of this process has now moved online due to changes in the administration of the background checks for volunteers imposed by the governmental offices governing these. This change, whilst it has been frustrating for some volunteers as some have *“never done anything like that so wasn’t sure how to go about the checks and stuff”* (SO GB volunteer), others have viewed this change as a positive as *“today it is much quicker as a lot is carried out online”* (SO Ireland volunteer). In order to match this and further streamline the recruitment process, other elements have been transferred to online. This removes the requirement of volunteers to travel to a police station for identification checking and to travel to Special Olympics offices for interviews. Despite the checks in place, there is a suggestion from one volunteer that this process is *“not thorough enough considering its vulnerable adults and children that are being dealt with”* (SO Ireland volunteer). Does this perhaps suggest a weakness in the process? It highlights the need for the National Programs to support new volunteers through this process to remove the complexity, particularly for volunteers who lack the computer literacy required to complete the paperwork online. Whilst this is a legal process and is therefore out of the control of Special Olympics, it perhaps highlights an area they must monitor closely to ensure procedures are correctly followed to oversee the safety of both athletes and volunteers.

This directly leads onto the initial training and induction of volunteers as this too has been moved online. Previously volunteers had been required to travel to training sessions which has varied in terms of the success with some suggesting that *“training was long to make sure*

*volunteers are aware of their duties*” (SO Hellas volunteer) and *“once registered (I) was treated very well at my training”* (SO Ireland volunteer) whilst others had a somewhat more negative view of the training as *“one training event (invited twice) though instructions for the day were poor”* (SO GB volunteer) and some *“had to travel to Dublin for training which was a bit too far to have to go for a few hours training which mostly could have been done closer to home”* (SO Ireland volunteer). This may further exacerbate the feelings of frustrations experienced by some volunteers waiting on the long process to be complete as they wait for the next training session. Furthermore, the delays caused by staff workloads are also worsened as staff must plan and deliver the induction training.

A potential solution which would enable a personal experience to be provided whilst not placing time pressures or commitments on members of staff or the applying volunteer to attend an interview was highlighted by SO Ireland staff and a volunteer that was interviewed. Both interviewees described how every newly registered volunteer receives a welcome telephone call from a volunteer within their support centre. This enables the organisation to ensure the entire registration process has been completed but also provides the new volunteer with the opportunity to ask any questions they may have as well as express the type of role they would most like to undertake. The support centre volunteer will outline roles within clubs, events, administration, fundraising etc and sign post the new volunteer on these opportunities. Staff outlined that this process had been extremely beneficial in assisting the organisation to streamline the process of assigning new volunteers but also to help prevent volunteers *“slipping through the net”* (SO Ireland staff). This aligns directly with some of the issues experienced by volunteers who found *“the wait without hearing (about roles) is long”* (SO GB volunteer) which led to some volunteers feeling *“surprised that had no acknowledgment or contact from SO GB about becoming a volunteer”* (SO GB volunteer). The anecdotal feedback received by Special Olympics Ireland on those phone calls coupled with the experiences of some volunteers’ lack of contact suggests that a procedure such as that introduced by Special Olympics Ireland may have a positive impact on the volunteer experience and the organisation efficiency thus should be considered for further expansion and implementation across other programs. An additional extension to this to further improve volunteer involvement would be to have volunteer trainers deliver the induction training. This could therefore run on a more regular basis in more areas within each National Program, reducing waiting time for new volunteers without further increasing the capacity placed on staff.

SO GB staff also outlined their ideal scenario of having a volunteer co-ordinator in each club to drive recruitment, registration and training of new volunteers. This would extend their current pilot of having two volunteers working two days per week alongside staff members. Another, and perhaps more feasible option here would encapsulate the premise of the SO Ireland and SO GB procedures. Volunteer co-ordinators or small teams should be assigned to each region or area within National Programs. These teams or individuals would work closely with the clubs in their area to determine the volunteering needs of the club, recruit and assign new volunteers, guide them through the registration process and deliver induction training within their areas. This would help the National Program achieve many of the key elements outlined by this research thus far; new volunteers would receive a more consistent, positive experience, personal relationships would be developed and a sense of community would continue to be built whilst also relieving the pressure and workload on staff.

Overall therefore, the key take away messages regarding recruitment is that more consistency is required as the experiences of games time recruitment and non-games time recruitment can vary significantly. There appears to be no standard procedure either within or across National Programs at present, however, interviews with staff members from all three participating programs showed that each is currently in the process of developing a volunteer strategy. Recruitment is one key area the programs are seeking to improve with this being something that is already occurring. Volunteers from each of the programs have recognised how the process has developed and improved as it has become more formalised since they first registered. The process *“6 years ago (was) very poor recently much more efficient”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and it *“took longer 13 years ago as the process now has changed dramatically”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *“20 years ago when it first started up I never got any feedback and there was very little support for volunteers!”* (SO GB volunteer) however, *“since (2009) a lot of things have changed”* (SO Hellas volunteer). Therefore, it is clear to see that recruitment is an evolving process with improvements still to be made, however, this is something that is recognised by the organisation. The elements that are currently working across all National Programs are providing that personal experience and contact in a manner that allows minimal time commitments from both staff and volunteers. At present there is a disparity between the organisation of the recruitment process during games time versus non-games time and without a standardised process in existence for either it is difficult to ascertain the details of either, therefore it is important for the organisation to recognise these differences. Due to the variations in needs based on the

hosting of a major sporting event, the development of a policy for recruitment should recognise procedures for these two very different elements.

## 7.3 Communication

Communication is vital for any organisation both in relation to the level of communication with their volunteers but also with the general public to ensure an increasing awareness of the organisation as a whole. Participants were asked about both of these elements to gain an understanding of their opinions on the effectiveness of the level of communication they receive as well as their perceptions of the level of knowledge of Special Olympics amongst the general public.

### 7.3.1 Communication with the General Public

Whilst there is a mixture of opinion regarding the communication with the general public, the consensus is that this requires improvement. Volunteers recognise the importance of this and the role that it can play in recruiting new volunteers. A high level of communication can *“attract new volunteers”* (SO Hellas volunteer) and it *“might allow for more volunteers to come forward and for more athletes to take part”* (SO Ireland volunteer). A co-ordinated response to this should include both the volunteering department and the communications department; something that was recognised by staff members within the National Programs who outlined their desire to improve their community profiles.

The current feelings of volunteers is that the general public lack awareness of the organisation as a whole and *“knowledge or understanding of S.O., what it offers, or how it operates”* (SO GB volunteer) as *“I don’t think the public really gets a lot of info”* (SO Ireland volunteer) about the organisation. It is also suggested that promotion of the organisation occurs only around the time of National and International events or when a fundraising drive is taking place; *“The organisation tries its best to keep volunteers and general public informed of any developments and practices, although I feel that this happens mostly before national and international games”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and that *“the general public should be made aware of Special Olympics all the time and not when they are fundraising in their areas”* (SO Ireland volunteers). It can be seen here these comments are focused on SO Ireland which raises the question of whether or not this is a specific issue within SO Ireland or if their volunteers are more aware of the organisation and how it could potentially operate? Indeed this opinion is directly contradicted by a SO Hellas volunteer who felt that *“No events (are) addressed to the general public like schools etc about the subject of Special Olympics nor about its meaning and also nothing about promoting volunteering in connection with S.O.”*

SO Hellas volunteers have generally been more positive regarding the impact of events with the suggestion that communication with the public is good, *“especially after the Games of 2011 in Athens”* (SO Hellas volunteer) and this helps lead to good attendance at events as *“all year (round) many events take place and the public is informed and watch many of them”* (SO Hellas volunteer). Similar to the impact of International Games on recruitment, SO GB volunteers were the one group who did not discuss a variation in communication, in either a positive or negative manner, surrounding a major event.

In general, communication and promotion of the organisation to the public is lacking in the opinions of volunteers and there are *“too many missed PR opportunities”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and that the *“General public is STILL UNAWARE (sic) of what Special Olympics is – many think it’s paraolympics (Sic)”* (SO Ireland volunteer). This communication can vary in different areas even within National Programs and this poses additional challenges for the programs with unique geographical situations such as the Greek Islands for SO Hellas, the cross jurisdiction between Northern Ireland (UK) and the Republic of Ireland faced by SO Ireland and the multiple nations; Scotland, England and Wales, within SO GB. In SO Hellas it is felt that *“the general public is not well informed, at least not on the ionian Islands. It is difficult to contact parents with children with Intellectual disabilities”* (SO Hellas volunteer) whilst in Ireland it is felt that *“the general public in Ulster know very little and no coverage on TV (eg when national games were here in 2006 or very little. This is not so in South of Ireland where national event get great profile both on TV and general public turn out to cheer athletes on the street for miles!”* (SO Ireland volunteer). One volunteer who has lived in multiple locations agrees with this opinion and also feels that this issue does not only exist within particular programs as *“within Ireland I feel the organisation is more visible to the general public however not so much in England/ Scotland/ N.Ireland – other areas where I have lived”* (SO Ireland volunteer). This disparity is also viewed on a larger scale and *“it infuriates me that SOI is so big in America yet GB get hardly any media coverage at all.”* (SO GB volunteer) and *“I don’t think awareness raising in my local area is that pro active”* (SO GB volunteer) with *“too much is London centred and not enough attention is given to other areas”* (SO GB volunteer).

This is clearly an area of frustration for volunteers who recognise the impact that an increase in public awareness could have for both athlete recognition and volunteer recruitment. This opinion is followed through with staff who stated their desire to do more. Both SO Ireland and SO GB staff have outlined feelings of ‘firefighting’ or ‘treading water’ as they are mostly keeping up with what needs done. An SO GB staff member stated that their ideal would be



to *“have a media co-ordinator at every single one of our clubs..... the whole purpose of the role would be to try and get more awareness about the club”* (SO GB staff). This would enable members of staff to focus more on the co-ordination of the communications and media within the National Program. From discussions with members of staff across all participating National Programs it was evident that the approach adopted was more focused and co-ordinated around games time as staff were able to outline this in greater detail. This further evidence the gap that exists in this area and therefore the need for a more cohesive policy to promote the organisation all year round. The links with the volunteer department would increase the likelihood of recruiting volunteers suited to the roles of communication co-ordinators within clubs or indeed within regions as a starting point. SO GB staff members outlined links they have with universities and colleges who specialise in media which has provided them with a strong team of volunteers at major events. An enhancement of this relationship could therefore aid this area. The language used by some of the volunteers raises the question of who’s responsibility it is to increase awareness? Volunteers focused on the point that not enough was being done but did not suggest solutions or outline who could do this. Is there an over reliance on staff to perform these roles or to lead volunteers? As a volunteer led organisation, perhaps a greater emphasis needs to be placed on having volunteers in these lead roles, delivering training or induction sessions to new volunteers.

Chapter three discussed the issue of volunteers feeling pushed out of key roles as a result of the formalisation and professionalisation of volunteer processes and organisations. Roles initially undertaken by volunteers are now performed by staff which has led to this over reliance on staff by volunteers. This supports the recommendation already made that a volunteer or team of volunteers to oversee recruitment would create a better process. An expansion to this to include communication volunteers to work with both clubs and the recruitment team to promote the organisation, the individual clubs in their areas and any existing volunteering opportunities. This would not only lessen the workload for staff but would help ensure new volunteers do not fall through the gaps and are encouraged to become more involved and engaged with the organisation. However, one consideration for the implementation of such a program is the initial training of the volunteer leaders or mentors. A new volunteer leadership training program may be required in addition to content specific training. Whilst this could be a standardised program across National Programs, jurisdiction specific content would also be required to ensure legal procedures are followed such as background checks and vetting that is required for volunteers within the UK and Ireland.

Whilst the general consensus amongst volunteers is that communication and promotion of the organisation needs to, and can improve, a number of volunteers believe that this is something their National Program does well or is at least improving. One SO Hellas volunteer felt that *“the organisation is always open in communication and keeping everyone, including the general public informed about (the) organisation”* and even furthermore, *“the whole organisation worldwide does a great job in communication matters”* (SO Hellas volunteer). The use of media has been *“well used to publicise the organisation and events”* (SO Ireland volunteer). The improvement in this area is recognised and appreciated by volunteers as *“it seems to be better than it used to be. I never used to see ads or posters but now I do”* (SO GB volunteer) and that this *“publicity helps spread the opportunities”* (SO GB volunteer). Additionally, there is a perception amongst some that *“the organisation has a communication policy which informs the general public and attracts new volunteers”* (SO Hellas volunteer) yet this perception is not upheld by many.

### 7.3.2 Communication with volunteers

Effective communication with volunteers not only ensures adequate levels of volunteers being recruited for events but also enhances the volunteer experience as an open line of communication will heighten feelings of autonomy and subsequently their desire to become more engaged with the organisation. Again, the experiences of volunteers, both within and cross National Programs is varied and inconsistent. Volunteers are unaware of any policy implementation within this area with the main opinion being that it occurs primarily around events; *“I would normally get a call a week before an event which leaves very little time to organise myself to be available”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *“I am contacted early enough before the event and can note it so I do not double book myself”* (SO Ireland volunteer).

Communication with volunteers is perceived as positive and effective by a higher proportion of volunteers in comparison to those who feel communication with the general public is effective. Many believe that *“communication is effective... most of the time”* (SO Hellas volunteer), *“I have as much information as I want/ need”* (SO Ireland volunteer) as *“I get constant update from emails”* (SO GB volunteer). Currently, communication takes place through a variety of platforms including social media, emails and newsletters, each with a variation of success. Newsletters were discussed by both SO Ireland and SO GB volunteers suggesting that there is no newsletter used for communication with SO Hellas volunteers. Described as *“really good”* and *“great”* by SO GB volunteers suggests that volunteers are engaged in the newsletters as a source of information, however, this was not reflected in the findings in chapter six which found only six volunteers followed the link from the newsletter

to take part in this research. The initial thoughts on the newsletter also reflect the opinions of SO GB staff members who had felt their newsletter has been having a positive effect on the level of engagement with volunteers and it had been implemented for this reason. Within SO Ireland there is contradicting information regarding the newsletter; one volunteer suggesting that *“the connect magazine is excellent”* whilst another suggested that *“connect magazine was useful but is now gone”* (SO Ireland volunteers). This was somewhat clarified by SO Ireland staff who said that originally the magazine was sent to volunteers monthly before being dropped to quarterly and is now no longer sent out as this was not as effective as the organisation had hoped as there were many volunteers who either didn’t read the newsletter or didn’t receive it due to large numbers of emails being undeliverable. Additionally, the newsletter took a substantial amount of resources and staff time compared to the benefit garnered from it and in today’s economic climate where expenditure must be justified to funding bodies, this may not be deemed a justifiable use of resources. Whilst there is a disparity in the success of the newsletter, it is a useful tool for ensuring volunteers are kept up to date with information.

Online profile is something that any organisation in today’s climate must utilize both as an information point but also as a promotional tool. According to volunteers, Special Olympics do this quite effectively on the whole, however, there is definitely room for improvement. Across the National Programs the split of those with positive views of communication versus those with negative views show a relatively even balance. Social media is not mentioned by SO Hellas volunteers except for one volunteer who states that *“through social media information exchange (sic) is easy and public can get easily informed”*. Although this does indicate positive views on the use of social media within SO Hellas, this is an isolated comment thus suggesting that social media is not considered by the majority of volunteers in relation to communication. Therefore, SO Hellas volunteers outline email as the primary form of communications received from the organisation.

Similarly, SO Ireland volunteers have expressed mixed views of the use of social media with some volunteers expressing that *“the use of social media is very good”* (SO Ireland volunteer) with others suggesting that they *“feel social media could play a bigger part”* (SO Ireland volunteer) in the organisation and that *“facebook, twitter and website could do with more regular updates”* (SO Ireland volunteer), This brings the issue of the website with some suggesting that the *“website is very bad to navigate and not up to date”* (SO Ireland volunteer) whilst others indicate that the *“website is great although could be more up to date”* (SO Ireland volunteer).

Use of social media and the website within SO GB appears to be more effective in the views of the volunteers who outline that *“through Twitter, Facebook and the SO website it is easy to find information”* (SO GB volunteer), *“there does tend to be plenty of things put on Facebook”* (SO GB volunteer) and that *“volunteers are kept informed through the fb (sic) page”* (SO GB volunteer). SO GB staff members have outlined that whilst there is no dedicated communication policy in relation to the management of volunteers, a definite effort has been made such as a private Facebook group for SO GB volunteers to enable the organisation to provide instant and regular updates and advertise events which require volunteers.

As already stated, emails provide the primary method of communication from Special Olympics. It was outlined by staff members across National Programs that emails are primarily disseminated through the contact with each club as this maintains a hierarchy flow of communication enabling the process to be streamlined for efficiency. This appears to be effective for the most part with volunteers believing that *“emails are usually fairly comprehensive”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and that *“the organisation is always open in communication”* (SO Hellas volunteer) and some volunteers feel well informed as they *“get constant update from emails”* (SO GB volunteer). However, there are suggestions that volunteers can only get information *“if the volunteer goes looking for what is needed”* (SO GB volunteer) and that *“correspondence is intermittent”* (SO Ireland volunteer). A breakdown in this communication line may occur at different levels as *“Not sure whether it’s an issue with our club handing information down, but we often feel we don’t know much about SO on a national level. Almost like we’re in a different level and don’t need to know what’s going on outside county/ regional”* (SO GB volunteer). This indicates the requirement for a better monitoring process to be put in place to aid a smooth communication line. This would assist in removing feelings of frustration and of being isolated or maligned from the organisation. The breakdown of age ranges of volunteers may have an impact on the use of and perceptions of social media. The most positive National Program in relation to the use of social media was the SO GB volunteers which has potentially been impacted by the slightly higher response rate of youth volunteers (15.22%). Could there be a generational gap that may have an impact on the use and perceptions of social media? Whilst the numbers of youth volunteers participating in this research to effectively determine this relationship is relatively low, it suggests a potential confounding variable in the determination of the effective use of social media by Special Olympics. However, one may argue that this could be a useful avenue to explore in order to increase the levels of youth engagement within the organisation.

### 7.3.3 Falling through the gap

Leading on from this, another sub theme within the main theme of communication is that of allowing volunteers to ‘fall through the gap’. There are several cases in each participating National Program of volunteers who feel they have been allowed to drift away from volunteering without any concrete attempts to retain them. Furthermore, some have also suggested that they have actively sought volunteering opportunities but without success. The following comments provide an overview of this area and the experiences of volunteers.

*“Since moving from Ireland to the UK, I have had very little Comms, even though my email address is still on the system”* (SO Ireland volunteer)

*“I haven’t received any emails in a long time”* (SO Ireland volunteer)

*“At the time I was involved yes, since then I am not aware of clubs in my area or activities I could get involved in so the full communication stopped after my initial stint”* (SO Ireland volunteer)

*“There were some periods in the past when I received very little communication and wasn’t therefore very involved in the organisation”* (SO Ireland volunteer)

*“The communication from the organisation is only for some volunteers and not to all”* (SO Hellas volunteer)

*“I thought it was (effective) but now realising how long I have been away from it and haven’t been asked or encouraged to come back then may be not”* (SO GB volunteer)

*“Could be a bit better not had any communication since I applied to volunteer no acknowledgement or anything”* (SO GB volunteer)

*“Absolutely not Have tried for 3 years to be more involved and had promises of follow up which never happen. I volunteer whenever I hear of an opportunity – sometimes travelling (sic) hundreds of miles. I wish comms were better”* (SO GB volunteer)

*“If you are 20 years in the organisation and you have your friends in there then maybe YES (sic). If you are 2 – 3 or even 10 years then NO (sic)”* (SO Hellas volunteer)

Whilst the balance of these statements may suggest a skewing of the negative towards SO Ireland, it must be recognised that, as shown in chapter five, there were more SO Ireland volunteers participating in this study and therefore proportionality must be taken into account. Additionally, SO GB had the lowest participation levels yet had more comments than SO Hellas volunteers perhaps indicating a heightened awareness amongst SO GB in

comparison to their Greek counterparts. The statements indicate a number of key points which should be considered by Special Olympics as an organisation in order to further enhance retention rates. Maintaining and monitoring an efficient communication protocol in conjunction with both the volunteer and communications departments may lead to an enhanced volunteer experience and satisfaction thus encouraging more volunteers to continue with their activities. It is clear from these statements that there is a desire to be more engaged and the receiving of an email or newsletter may act as a catalyst for engagement. It is apparent that those volunteers making these statements are reliant on the organisation for information provision perhaps indicating they are not involved in a club. Similar to the recommendation regarding recruitment, this highlights the requirement of a multifaceted approach to communication in order to differentiate between 'regional volunteers' i.e. those not affiliated to a club but volunteer solely for the region or National Program at events, in the support centre, fundraising etc; and club volunteers who would receive information disseminated via their club. The lack of communication is a definite source of frustration from some volunteers who wish to seek these opportunities, however, staff members have discussed the fine balance that must be struck between burdening volunteers with an overload of information and ensuring they have enough to make informed decisions over the activities they undertake. As a result, one protocol implemented by SO Ireland is that information regarding all clubs, the sports they do and the club contact details to provide volunteers with the information required to become affiliated to a club is provided online on their website. However, the comments outlined earlier stating inadequacies of the website indicate that this is not viewed as effective as members of staff may suggest. Staff have also outlined the process implemented where volunteers can register their interest in assisting at an event when the yearly calendar is published on their website. According to interviews with SO Ireland staff and support centre volunteers, this process has worked well in the recruitment for events and has lowered the workload for both staff and volunteers enabling them to introduce the volunteer welcome call discussed earlier in this chapter. The success of this highlights a potentially important process in improving communication and the volunteer experience. This has, in part, been replicated by both SO Hellas and SO GB who provide club lists on their websites to help outline volunteer opportunities. Perhaps an organisation wide format or procedure could advise National Programs on how best to structure such elements of websites to effectively utilize these technologies to recruit volunteers for events and to signpost both new and established volunteers to new opportunities and clubs.

Overall, volunteers recognise that communication is an area that their National Programs are improving with the likes of *“the new volunteering questionnaire (being) very good”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and it is *“getting better”* (SO Ireland volunteer) as *“the organisation tries its best to keep volunteers”* (SO Ireland volunteer). However, there is a recognition that *“this can all take money and resources which the organisation doesn’t really have”* (SO GB volunteer) yet *“they defentey (sic) tried (to improve), but judging from the result, I doubt it worked very well”* (SO Hellas volunteer). In terms of policy, some of the processes implemented to date have aided in the enhancement of the volunteer experience, although this must continue to be streamlined as each National Program grows. One way of doing this would be to utilize volunteers in communication roles such as the welcome phone calls within SO Ireland support centres, the effective use of volunteers to enhance the online presence of SO GB during the National Games 2017, or the ease of accessing information such as events and clubs to enable volunteers to select opportunities.

## 7.4 Building the volunteer experience

Whilst the volunteer experience has been discussed throughout this chapter, it is clear through the analysis of the volunteer’s responses to the questionnaire that it has developed as a key theme in its own right. There are many factors influencing the volunteer experience including their experiences at recruitment and communication with the organisation, both of which have been discussed in detail, but also the multifaceted structure of the organisation, the support network and the opportunities available for the volunteers.

The organisational structure lends itself to the provision of a wide range of opportunities for both athletes and volunteers and this is recognised as a positive for the organisation amongst volunteers. Questions surrounding whether or not the organisation does anything to either encourage or discourage people from continuing to volunteer and if overall volunteer experiences have been positive, negative or both have elicited responses from the three National Programs pertaining to the variety of available roles. *“I’m not very sporty at all so I don’t really do any coaching or anything so I like how I can still volunteer and do things that are more suited to me as a person”* (SO GB volunteer), *“I would like to do training for the computer systems as I think it would be a good way for me to help as I think I’m too old for doing sports”* (SO GB volunteer), the organisation *“put me in the correct roles for me, pushed me out of comfort zone to progress”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *“I have been involved in so many different areas”* (SO Ireland volunteer); *“admin and welfare are my main niches in life and being offered to help in admin has influenced my decision to remain with SO”* (SO Ireland

volunteer). These comments are indicative of the positive impact that the available variations of role has had on encouraging volunteer engagement. In addition to the sports provision both within clubs and at events, volunteers have the opportunity to undertake administrative roles, fundraising roles and health promotion roles as well as participating at a regional or management level as co-ordinators, committee members or members of the regional squad management team for National events. Whilst it is clear that this is a major strength of the organisation and acts as a strong tool in encouraging volunteer retention, it would be remiss to suggest that improvement is not required within this area. Indeed, several volunteers have suggested that their experiences have been *“mostly negative due to inflexibility of procedures”* (SO Ireland volunteer) within the organisation and that they need to *“keep volunteers interested by rotation i.e. not use the same ones over and over (sic) again”* (SO Hellas volunteer). This in itself could be suggested as a recommendation for the organisation. To allow a greater level of retention around key roles and to improve the succession of volunteers into roles as older volunteers retire, a mentoring program may be required. This will allow volunteers to gain experience in areas with the confidence of knowing support structures are in place to assist them to undertake their role.

The predominant factor that differentiates Special Olympics from other volunteer organisations is the social relationships that are developed through Special Olympics in addition to the competitive sporting opportunities. The development of friendships through meeting other volunteers and interactions with athletes is consistently shown to be a common denominator in enhancing the volunteer experience thus aiding retention. When asked if Special Olympics has done anything to influence a volunteers' decision about whether to continue to volunteer or not, the majority of comments have either said *“No, this is my personal choice influenced only by myself”* (SO GB volunteer) or that *“the athletes make this positive!”* (SO Hellas volunteer). This indicates the importance of having autonomy over their own actions and also the enjoyment they receive from giving back to the athletes. This again provides further evidence that the organisation is currently reliant, and perhaps over reliant on the athletes to attract and help retain volunteers. However, contradicting this is the perceptions of some volunteers that *“the whole movement is influential”* (SO Hellas volunteer) and the overall structure and management of the organisation is what helps enhance the volunteer experience and thus the rate of retention as *“events are well run”* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *“keeping us informed on events and training and encouraging you to stay involved”* (SO Ireland volunteer).



This leads onto the support aspect of the policy and strategies adopted by the organisation to enhance retention rates. The general consensus of participants is that they feel well supported in their roles by members of SO staff, however, this primarily focuses on staff within smaller regional offices with experiences of staff in the 'central' National office being less positive.

*"I have always been well supported by SO Staff and appreciate the opportunities available"*  
(SO Ireland volunteer)

*"SO provides a valuable supporting structure and disciplined, organised background"* (SO Ireland volunteer)

*"By showing me support and helping me make certain decisions"* (SO Ireland volunteer)

*"The (regional) staff are all great – the contact with them has made it an even more positive experience"* (SO GB volunteer)

*"Special Olympics as an organisation offers motivation to continue volunteering"* (SO Hellas volunteer)

*"Lack of support and training and politics is the negative"* (SO GB volunteer)

*"Taking part in the area, regional events and national events the organisers begin to recognise you and are very welcoming – great camaraderie! However this took a couple of years and initially felt a bit like an outsider"* (SO Ireland volunteer)

These statements show the value placed on that personal interaction with staff in influencing their overall opinions of their time spent with the organisation. It is therefore imperative for the development of the volunteer strategies to ensure that this is maintained. However, there are also some suggestions that this experience has not filtered into the clubs as staff are not as involved with clubs as they are with events and administration; *"I feel (Special Olympics) are slightly irrelevant in running of a club"* (SO Ireland volunteer), *"within my club the experience has been good and that is the main part of my volunteering. I don't need to have much contact with the Special Olympics organisation itself"* (SO Ireland volunteer) and *"the clubs were all but ignored during (the) process"* (SO Ireland volunteer) of restructuring three years ago. Volunteers felt that this negatively impacted the organisation yet there was no consultation or communication with the clubs, who are in effect *"key stakeholders"* (SO Ireland volunteer). The influence and importance of the economic and financial difficulties faced by Third Sector Organisations over the last one to two decades has had a significant

impact on the structures of National Programs with a series of compulsory redundancies being enforced by at least one of the programs involved in this study.

On discussion with both SO Ireland and SO GB staff, it has become apparent that they are seeking to implement strategies to ensure clubs are supported and, in both cases, have already started this process. SO Ireland have restructured and hired Regional Development Officers (RDO) for volunteers in order to allow their clubs RDO to focus solely on supporting clubs. Staff members also discussed the new 'Club of the Month Award' which allows for the recognition of clubs, their athletes and their volunteers and also promotes the positive experiences thus acting as an effective recruitment tool due to its promotion on the website and social media. SO GB have their partnership team which consists of two staff members whose sole responsibility is providing support to new clubs within their first two years of operation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that club volunteers are appreciative of the support. As both of these strategies have appeared to have success it is important that a process of monitoring and evaluation continues to ensure they are adopted into the volunteer policies that the National Programs are seeking to implement.

The final sub theme within the theme of the volunteer experience is the training provided by Special Olympics. Not surprisingly, as a sporting organisation, the primary training mentioned by volunteers was coaching qualifications within their chosen sport. However, a large number of other training courses have also been mentioned including safeguarding, first aid, club management training; membership officer, athlete protection officer and job specific training such as competition management and event management training. Furthermore, volunteers from each of the three National Programs have been offered disability awareness training which was viewed as extremely beneficial for volunteers both within and outside the organisation. There are a number of volunteers across the program who state that they have never been offered training, however, based on the apparent abundance of training taking place, it should perhaps be questioned if this may be more related to communication issues outlined earlier in this chapter as opposed to a lack of offers? Regardless of the reason, it is an issue of consistency which must be addressed.

Training appears to be organised on an ad hoc basis and is the responsibility of individual staff members. No discussion took place from volunteers or staff about a dedicated training and development department or staff members. Greater co-ordination of training opportunities with potential additions of leadership and induction delivery training as discussed earlier could help ensure volunteers know where to find any opportunities they

may wish to avail of whilst also lower the rates of volunteers who feel they are missing out and not being offered training.

The range and amount of training on offer to volunteers does appear to vary between National Programs. SO Ireland volunteers have indicated a high volume of training courses in comparison to SO Hellas volunteers. Based on the year each National Program was established, their athlete numbers, volunteer numbers and numbers of paid staff, one may postulate that SO Hellas is the 'youngest' and potentially the least developed of the programs. This, coupled with the economic situation in Greece in the last ten years impacting funding adds further evidence that these factors may have an impact on the developmental stage of the program and therefore on the amount of training they are able to provide to their volunteers.

Pertaining to the impact that volunteer training may have on the overall experience and retention of the volunteers, the perceived value that volunteers place on the training is vital to its success. Training courses have been beneficial as they have acted as a good source of information on the structure and organisation within Special Olympics as it *"has shown me another level in the working of the organisation"* (SO Ireland volunteer). It is also noted by volunteers that the training has been beneficial to themselves on both a personal and professional level as it *"helped me to feel a strong part of the SO community and have a better understanding of the SO culture"* (SO Hellas volunteer) and *"has given me a sense of achievement"* (SO Ireland volunteer). It has also *"helped me learn to delegate at events and how to communicate better with different types of people which is a good thing for my work"* (SO GB volunteer). It is therefore clear that training has benefits for both the organisation and the volunteers and is mutually beneficial to ensure that this plays a key role in the future development of the organisation and its volunteers.

## 7.5 Conclusions

This chapter has highlighted some key findings pertaining to Special Olympics volunteering policies and strategies, the current practices, volunteers perceptions of these and their awareness. Whilst it is clear that to date there has been a lack of strategic policy implementation, it is also clear that as an organisation, Special Olympics have continued to operate in a manner that has been effective in the recruitment and management of its volunteers. However, there are a number of areas where volunteers experience inconsistencies, primarily in the recruitment process and the communication received. Throughout this chapter, SO Hellas volunteers appear to focus more on the positives and

how good their experience has been in comparison to their SO GB and SO Ireland counterparts. In terms of numbers of volunteers, SO Hellas remains the smallest of these three National Programs and this could potentially indicate that as programs develop and grow, a number of changes occur in the management. More volunteers 'fall through the gaps' and become inactive in both SO GB and SO Ireland than in SO Hellas according to respondents to the questionnaire and this is perhaps something to be considered moving forward. In order to ensure volunteer retention, it is vital that appropriate procedures and policies are devised and implemented prior to the levels of volunteers in both SO Ireland and SO GB. Indeed, this was further evidenced through discussions with SO GB and SO Ireland staff who outlined work currently being undertaken to develop a volunteer strategy with new staff roles and new procedures dedicated to improving the volunteer experience and ensuring volunteers are retained within the organisation. It may also be able to postulate that the size of the organisation in each participating country has impacted the volunteers' knowledge and opinions of any policies as well as their level of engagement and experience within the organisation. Earlier chapters discussed the years of involvement within Special Olympics and it was evident that SO Ireland had the most experienced volunteers within Special Olympics. This appears to have transferred through to their perceptions of the processes, SO Ireland and SO GB have in place with them more willing to voice their opinions for the improvement of the organisation for the athletes rather than focusing more so on the positives similar to the SO Hellas counterparts.

Overall, for the progression of the National Programs, and the organisation as a whole, this chapter highlights the need for a standardised policy strategy for volunteers. The key issues for consideration should not only include volunteer recruitment, communication and engagement but the variations indicated here in relation to games time versus non-games time suggest that this may play a pivotal role in the experiences of the volunteers and as such should also be considered in the development of any such policies. Procedures implemented to date such as the partnership team in SO GB and the volunteer welcome phone calls in SO Ireland, coupled with the personal experience and contact with staff still currently seen in SO Hellas shows that the required progress is currently underway. It also shows that National Programs could potentially learn from each other to help continue this progression. Utilizing volunteers in the correct manner will greatly enhance this by taking some roles away from staff thus allowing them to focus on the overall development. More engagement between the organisation and its key stakeholders i.e. volunteers and athletes will not only enhance feelings of autonomy, but it will allow the organisation to gain a better understanding of

some things that are happening 'on the ground' that they otherwise do not get the opportunity to see. Volunteers themselves feel that this is something that would enhance their experience yet presently, *"there is little opportunity to input from the clubs to influence SO policy"* (SO Ireland volunteer) despite the indication from all parties that the athletes and the volunteers are the integral part of the organisation.

There was a sense that regardless of how good the volunteer thought Special Olympics was, there needs to be more co-operation between Special Olympics and other voluntary organisations as this co-operation will assist the continued development required. Whilst the general consensus was that other organisations can benefit from working with Special Olympics, there are learning opportunities for both as *"best practices can always contribute from one organisation to another"* (SO Hellas volunteer).

The overall positive experience of volunteers offers one of the key learning opportunities both for Special Olympics and for other organisations reliant on volunteers. Ensuring volunteer satisfaction and positive experience will supersede the main issues they face. They must focus on the provision of a positive, personal experience and the development of a sense of community amongst volunteers and athletes whilst them implementing strategies and policies which improve their structure and efficiency without hindering the experience.

Equally, other organisations can learn from what Special Olympics do not do. The apparent lack of strategic volunteer policies within the three National Programs has led to quite a disjointed, inconsistent approach in several areas including communication, recruitment and building the volunteer experience. It is paramount for organisations to have a coherent policy and structure in place to ensure volunteers have equally as positive experiences as each other regardless of their time of joining or the role they are undertaking. This policy must be suitable for a multifaceted organisation that requires a combination of event volunteers and long term volunteers as these have produced a variety of results.

## Conclusion

The research outlined in this thesis has sought to investigate cultural variations amongst volunteers within the context of Special Olympics whilst also gaining an understanding of the volunteer's knowledge and opinions of the policies and strategies used by the organisation to aid retention. Whilst one of the major areas of study on volunteerism considers the motivation of volunteers, research to date has largely ignored the large population sample of individuals who volunteer within disability sport. A mixed methods paradigm was utilised to provide a depth of data previously not garnered from volunteers on this scale. Furthermore, the inclusion of interviews with staff and volunteers from Special Olympics has allowed for the organisation to be viewed from multiple perspectives. Special Olympics as an organisation is uniquely placed within a relatively under researched field in the volunteering literature; disability sport. It also transcends both the sports sector and the disability sector due to its mission statement focus on social inclusion meaning it provides an interesting case study from which many lessons can be learned by organisations relying on volunteers.

Overall, it has become apparent through this program of research that Special Olympics as an organisation has over one million registered volunteers (Special Olympics, 2016) who assist in the provision of sporting, social and health opportunities for nearly five million athletes across 172 countries world-wide. The organisational structure which delineates co-ordination to individual National programs and regions, has allowed for the development and retention of a sense of community amongst its stakeholders; volunteers and athletes. This thesis has outlined how this community or familial feel has aided retention as volunteers have felt autonomy and loyalty to the organisation. However, inconsistencies which may have been caused, in part, by rapid growth rates threaten these retention rates by leading to feelings of frustration and subsequently risking heightening levels of Amotivation.

Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) encompass organisations classed as non-profit organisations who sit as a separate entity to both the public and private sector and

consists primarily of charities with the work of volunteers being a key defining element (Cuskelly, Hoyer & Auld, 2006). Whilst a period of professionalisation and formalisation has led to many of these organisations employing paid members of staff, their core 'workforce' remains their volunteers. The impact this has had on the level of engagement of volunteers has been shown within the literature with feelings of being pushed out and isolated from roles they previously performed which have been taken over by staff. This risks potential conflict as it is predicted that volunteers and paid employees possess very different primary motives (Wicker & Hallman, 2013) as staff may be more motivated by earning a salary. However, through interviews with staff of Special Olympics, it was clear that they were extremely positive about the organisation and its potential to improve the lives of people with Intellectual Disabilities with it appearing to be 'more than just a job' to these staff. This, in itself, would provide an interesting avenue of future research on how staff attitudes and beliefs impact their work and how in turn this influences the perceptions of volunteers. Interestingly, Special Olympics tends to adopt the key features of both the integrated and autonomous categories of Third Sector Sports Organisations. Traditionally, small and medium sized organisations would be classed as integrated due to their incorporation of volunteers into the organisation acting as additional members of staff. Autonomous organisations are more structured and often use a formalised approach to recruitment of volunteers through job descriptions, interviews etc. They are often more likely to provide opportunities for work experience to young graduates seeking to enhance their CVs (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). Whilst being classified as a large, multi-national organisation, the structure of Special Olympics allows them to incorporate volunteers into all levels of management with governing boards at regional, national and international level consisting primarily of volunteers. Each National Program operates independently from each other with decisions over programs delivered etc being made at National level. However, many National programs do still offer the work experience and development opportunities for graduates and young volunteers which adds elements of an autonomous organisation.

Demographical research in the volunteerism field highlights that volunteers account for approximately 109 million full time employee equivalents, 29.2 million of these in the European and Central Asian region (UNV, 2018). However, there are a number of issues evident in the assessment of these figures; 80% of world-wide volunteering activities and 73.3% within Europe and Central Asia take place on an informal basis (UNV, 2018). This suggests that there may be a high proportion of volunteering activities that go under reported or indeed unreported. Additionally, the gender breakdown of volunteers varies significantly depending on the sector. The 2018 State of the Worlds Volunteerism Report (UNV, 2018) indicates a 57% female and 43% male gender split in volunteers or 54% female to 46% male within Europe and Central Asia. The program of research within this thesis has already proposed that Special Olympics sits in a unique position that encompasses both the disability and sports fields. Therefore, when considering how this may impact rates of volunteering one must compare these fields. Sports volunteering literature highlights that males are more likely to volunteer than females with 60% males to 40% females in the UK (Sport England, 2017). However, when looking at those volunteering with people with disabilities, the figure changes significantly to 70.6% females and 29.4% males (Janus & Misorek, 2018). This provides evidence for the postulation that Special Olympics may sit within the disability field as much as the sports sector. This was further supported by this study which found 66.25% female and 33.1% male volunteers. Furthermore, the rates of youth volunteers within this study were low (12.43% 16 – 24 year olds) in comparison to 22% in the Sport England Report (2017) and 29.35% aged 12 – 25 years old volunteering for Special Olympics (Special Olympics, 2016).

The key areas of study within this body of work encompasses sports, volunteerism, culture and disability. It was therefore pertinent to fully outline these fields and understand the links between them (chapters one to three). Theoretically, disability has been viewed from many different perspectives and approaches such as the philanthropic approach, the medical approach, the social approach as well as the Medical model, Social model, Biopsychosocial model and the Social Relational model. This extensive list of approaches and models highlights the complexity of the field of



disability research. Chapter two analyses the barriers to participation in activity and sport faced by people with disabilities. This is evident within the Sport England Active Lives Report (2017) which outlined rates of inactivity of 43% amongst people with disabilities in comparison to 21% people without disabilities. With barriers consisting of elements such as transport, support, opportunities and access to facilities, volunteers can play a pivotal role in removing some of these barriers thus potentially increasing participation rates.

Due to the perception and treatment of people with disabilities, sport opportunities did not exist until the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Subsequently, and since the inception of the International Stoke Mandeville Games in 1948 by Sir Ludwig Gutmann, the Paralympic Games have developed into one of the worlds largest major sporting events. More recently the Paralympic Games has grown in recognition within the media and profile and has increased acceptance of the abilities of people with disabilities to participate and compete at a high level within the sports sector. This has acted almost as a precursor and catalyst for greater inclusion of people with disabilities within society as a whole, and the sports sector.

As outlined, Special Olympics has grown exponentially and continues to do so in the social inclusion movement through the provision of sport. It has continually developed and incorporated new programs such as the Healthy Athlete Program and Unified Sports Program. Whilst this has allowed the organisation to provide for and support greater numbers of athletes, it subsequently requires greater numbers of volunteers to continue to do so. It is therefore vital for research such as that conducted within this study to gain a greater understanding of what motivates individuals to volunteer for Special Olympics as opposed to the multitude of other volunteer led organisations. It is also vital to understand how the practices and policies of the organisations may impact the long-term intentions of its volunteers.

## Research Rationale

The rationale for the research programme discussed and carried out throughout this thesis was guided by the key research question: 'Who volunteers for Special Olympics

and what keeps them coming back?’ The overarching aim is to begin to address gaps in the literature surrounding volunteers within the disability sports sector and consider the presence of cultural variations which may exist between volunteers from different Special Olympics National Programs; Special Olympics Ireland, Special Olympics Great Britain and Special Olympics Hellas. A relativist constructionism view was adopted for the purposes of this study due to the impact that their perceptions of Special Olympics will have on the beliefs and experiences of the volunteers with their motivations being based on the interactions they have with the key stakeholders in the organisation; the athletes, the staff and the other volunteers.

Motivation has been a focus of the literature surrounding sports volunteers to date, however, research has to some degree ignored volunteers within the disability sports sector. It has also been shown that people with disabilities have increased health requirements and are at higher risk of diseases such as cardiovascular disease, obesity and Type 2 diabetes, all of which can be aided by increased participation in sports and physical activity. However, despite this increased need, there are less opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity. As already mentioned, volunteers are vital for the delivery of sports services (de Cruz, 2005), it is therefore possible to posit that volunteers are essential for the improvement of the health of people with disabilities by providing opportunities for participation. Multiple theories of motivation exist within the literature (chapter one) however only a few have been used to explain what motivates an individual to volunteer; Theory of Planned Behaviour, Means End Theory and Self-Determination Theory. The Theory of Planned Behaviour posits that intention to continue to volunteer due to the interactions between behavioural controls to perform or not perform a behaviour (Kim et al. 2009). Means End Theory (Gutman, 1982) was applied within the field of volunteerism in the leisure industry as its focus on the outcomes and values for the individual participant was deemed to make it more relevant than its original application within marketing and the consumer industry (Long & Goldenberg, 2010). Whilst this was the theory to be applied most recently to the sports industry, it has not garnered much research or support. Therefore, the theory to most relevant to volunteerism in the sports sector is Self Determination

Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000; 2002). Three core psychological needs exist at the forefront of motivation; competence, relatedness and autonomy, however, Deci & Ryan suggest that motivation is achieved along a continuum of motivation ranging from Intrinsic to Amotivation.

Within the context of this thesis, the Coach Motivation Questionnaire (CMQ; McLean, Mallett & Newcombe, 2012) was utilised to critically analyse the motivation of volunteers across three Special Olympics National Programs (chapters one, five to six). Whilst some variations existed across cultures, with some being statistically significant, overall, findings suggest that regardless of culture or nationality, Special Olympics volunteers are highly intrinsically motivated and less likely to be motivated by external factors such as prizes, money or recognition. This indicates a high likelihood of volunteers experiencing strong levels of autonomy and loyalty towards the organisation.

The next aim to be addressed is that of 'gaining an understanding of the volunteers view of the processes and structures of volunteer management and retention within Special Olympics'. Chapter seven outlines the lack of awareness and understanding of volunteers regarding the policies the organisation has in place to co-ordinate and manage volunteers however, it is also clear that there is a lack of coherent volunteer strategies and policies in place within Special Olympics. Without such policies, volunteers have been unable to engage as effectively as they aim to and the organisation is unable to utilise the capabilities of their volunteers to their full potential. Each of the National Programs studied within this thesis are in the process of developing such a policy with staff keen to implement new processes, procedures to enhance the volunteer experiences and aid the growth of the organisation for the purposes of assisting athletes. General consensus amongst participants was a desire to become more engaged and influence the organisation at a higher level which, as already stated, has been negatively impacted by the lack of policies. The development of coherent strategies and policies for the recruitment and engagement of volunteers will enable Special Olympics to grow and provide more opportunities for both volunteers and athletes.

The issue of culture was addressed in order to determine if policies surrounding volunteer management would be impacted by the culture within each National Program thus informing Special Olympics and other multi-national volunteer led organisations on the potential feasibility of developing one, overarching volunteer policy or how this may need adaptations within individual cultures. Within sports volunteer research, culture literature is lacking and what little does exist focuses on variations in motivation. No research investigates how this may vary across the National Programs of one organisation and the subsequent level of impact on their recruitment and retention strategies. It is evident from this study that the culture and ethos created by the organisation supersedes the culture of each National Program. Whilst an individual's values and beliefs may have a major impact on their life, with regards to their involvement and engagement with Special Olympics, the culture and sense of community created by the organisation leads to more similarities than differences between culturally variant National Programs. Differences existed primarily in demographics, however, these were not found to be statistically significant.

The learning potential from this body of work has implications for both Special Olympics and external organisations who rely on the work of volunteers to support their delivery. The first being that of the development of community or culture within the organisation to help increase volunteer satisfaction, experience and autonomy which is of paramount importance to encourage long term volunteering. Secondly, collaborative working both between National Programs and across organisations will allow the sharing of ideas and resources, particularly in rural areas to allow organisations to help overcome issues such as transport of volunteers to enable them become more active. Thirdly, a lack of transparency of policies, processes and strategies discourages engagement of volunteers and risks ostracising those volunteers who wish to be more involved in decision making processes.

### Limitations of the study

Whilst a strong methodological rigour was outlined in chapter four, it is acknowledged that potential limitations exist. The restriction of the study to the geographical and cultural reimits of Ireland, Great Britain and Greece may limit the cultural exploration possible. The rationale

for the selection of the countries to include both culturally similar and culturally different countries has provided a range, however the inclusion of more countries would provide a wider variation along a spectrum of cultures. The clear absence of a comprehensive outline of cultural variations across the field of sports volunteerism and in particular, disability sport highlighted the need for this complex phenomenon to be explored and a research approach focused on one of the largest volunteer led disability sport organisations world-wide to address this gap.

Issues of participant recruitment and varying levels of engagement with the research found across the participating National Programs indicates the disadvantages of the use of online surveys for data collection. Recent trends in research promoting inclusion has utilised 'co-researchers' to improve the experience and rates of participation. In order to alleviate the potential language barrier for SO Hellas volunteers, staff were initially offered the opportunity to use a version of the questionnaire translated into Greek, however, on initial inspection, they felt the level of English was appropriate and would not hinder the participation of any of their volunteers. To further test this, the English questionnaire was provided to SO Hellas staff and a randomly selected sub group of volunteers to assess the level of understanding of the language. Initial comparisons of the results from SO Ireland, SO GB and SO Hellas results did not outline any significant variations that suggest a lack of understanding of the question or its meaning thus, SO Hellas were allowed to continue with the use of the English version of the survey. However, it may be possible to posit that a collaborative approach with co-researchers in each participating country comprising of Special Olympics volunteers who have been trained to deliver a consistent interview technique would allow further opportunities to engage with volunteers and aid participation.

The final limitation which must be considered across the volunteering research literature is that of inactive volunteers. In the case provided in this research, Special Olympics is effective in retaining volunteers and encouraging high levels of engagement. However, the potential skewing of data due to difficulties in engaging with inactive volunteers must be appreciated. Researchers within this area should work closely with organisations to develop ways of engaging with inactive volunteers. Firstly, this will encourage their renewed engagement with the organisation whilst, secondly, providing an invaluable insight into their reasons for becoming inactive to allow the overcoming of these barriers that were perceived to be stopping them from volunteering.

## Future directions of research

Volunteers within Special Olympics or indeed volunteers in disability sports are an under researched topic within the field of sports volunteerism. Whilst some studies have considered volunteers in this area with Long & Goldenberg (2010) analysing who volunteers and why, Li & Wu (2012) studying the attitudes of volunteers towards people with disabilities in Special Olympics, only the work of this study and that of Khoo, Suruijal and Engelhorn (2011) considers volunteers from a cultural perspective. However, this study is the only study to focus solely on a comparison of volunteers from Special Olympics as Khoo, Suruijal & Engelhorn (2011) used volunteers from a range of disability sports events including Special Olympics and Paralympics therefore potentially adding a further variation between volunteers. Therefore, further studies are required which incorporate more countries which expand outside of the European context. Also considering Special Olympics volunteers alongside samples of mainstream sports volunteers would provide an interesting comparison of whether other sports organisations cultivate the culture developed within Special Olympics and how this may impact volunteer motivation, satisfaction and retention rates.

A program such as Special Olympics Ireland provides an interesting case study which warrants further investigation. The number of volunteers and level of engagement is higher than other National Programs and it provides learning opportunities for other volunteer led organisations. A more in-depth analysis of how the culture within SO has been developed is required to fully understand how this has impacted the volunteers. Improvements such as better communication and greater transparency has been outlined within this body of work, however, a longitudinal case study will allow for the analysis of these changes, the impact of the implementation of volunteer policies and the retention rates of longer term, active volunteers.

The issues that have arisen as a result of a lack of coherent volunteer strategy or policy have been discussed in chapters five to seven, however, with each of the three participating National Programs in the process of developing their policy for volunteers, a longitudinal study looking at the impact the implementation of a policy has on the motives, retention and views of the volunteers over time. Research to date has focused on a cross sectional study or a retrospective study of volunteers looking at their motivations to start volunteering. Therefore, a longitudinal body of work may provide a greater level of detail of how the policies and strategies of the organisation vary, particularly in relation to the point of the

cycle the organisation is in; a National/ International Games year in comparison to a non-Games year.

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## Table of Appendices

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## Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet



Dear Special Olympics Volunteer

Thank you for expressing an interest in taking part in the research 'investigating volunteer management and motives within Special Olympics' as part of a PhD study at the Ulster University, Jordanstown.

The questionnaire should take approximately 30 mins to complete. Please read the information below prior to completing the questionnaire.

Also, should you require the questionnaire in an alternative format, please contact the principal researcher on the contact details listed below

### The Study

The aim of the research is to investigate why people choose to volunteer for Special Olympics. It also aims to gain your views on what Special Olympics, as an organisation do to keep you involved or indeed what they can improve on.

Due to the current economic climate, many organisations have to rely heavily on their volunteers to provide their service with many governments making increasing cuts to budgets. It is therefore important for us to look at how organisations recruit, train and retain their volunteers in order to maintain and indeed improve the service they provide i.e. providing sports training and competitions on local, national and international levels.

By taking part in this research you will provide valuable information that may be used to advise not only Special Olympics, but other sporting organisations on methods and strategies to help improve their retention of volunteers.

The research has been approved by Ulster University's research filter committee and Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia. By completing the questionnaire, you are providing consent to your answers being used for the purposes of the research. All answers will remain confidential and in order to protect your identity, you are not required to provide any personal contact details. Should you decide to participate, you can stop the questionnaire at any point during it and your data will be deleted. Please note that should you wish to withdraw from the research, you can do so by contacting the principle researcher with your participant number which you can find in the bottom right hand corner of each page on this questionnaire. However, at the end of the questionnaire, you will be given the opportunity to enter details should you wish to be contacted after the research with a copy of the overall results.

Please answer all questions as truthfully and completely as possible in order to provide a true reflection of your opinions and motivations. Should you have any questions prior to completing the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher on the details provided below.

Thank you in advance for taking part!

Principal researcher:  
Liz Carlin  
[Carlin-l4@email.ulster.ac.uk](mailto:Carlin-l4@email.ulster.ac.uk)

PhD Supervisor:  
Professor David Hassan  
[d.hassan@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:d.hassan@ulster.ac.uk)

## Appendix B: Questionnaire

### Section 1: Demographics

This first section of the questionnaire will focus on you. Please remember that all details that you provide are confidential and will only be used in the final report and analysis to give an overall picture of who volunteers for Special Olympics and why.

1. Are you:      Male      ☐  
                      Female      ☐
  
2. What age are you?      16 – 18      ☐  
                                      18 – 24      ☐  
                                      25 – 34      ☐  
                                      35 – 49      ☐  
                                      50 – 65      ☐  
                                      65+      ☐
  
3. What is your marital status?      Single      ☐  
    Married      ☐  
    Divorced      ☐  
    Widowed      ☐  
    I prefer not to answer      ☐
  
4. What is your employment status?      Employed Full-Time      ☐  
    Employed Part-Time      ☐  
    Unemployed      ☐  
    Self-employed      ☐  
    Student      ☐  
    Other      ☐  
    If employed:  
    5. What Sector do you work in? (e.g. Education, healthcare,  
    hospitality, service, sports etc)  
    \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Do you have any dependents?      Yes      ☐  
    No      ☐
  
7. If yes      Children      ☐  
    Adult Dependents      ☐  
    Elderly Dependents      ☐
  
8. How many?      \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2: Volunteer activities

This next section of the questionnaire will focus on your volunteering background including any other organisations you may be involved within this capacity. Please ensure you answer all questions as accurately as possible.

### 9. Are you an active volunteer for Special Olympics Ireland?

I.e. have you taken part in a Special Olympics Ireland (or within your own region) event in the last 12 months. This can include club training sessions, development, league or regional competitions and any additional events such as health promotion events

Yes ☐ (If yes, skip question 10)  
No ☐

### 10. Is there any specific reason why you are not currently an active volunteer with Special Olympics? (please tick all the options that apply to you)

Work commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of opportunities in your area	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of interest	<input type="checkbox"/>
It was a one off event	<input type="checkbox"/>	You didn't enjoy your experience	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____			

### 10a. If it was a one off event, what was it?

Fundraising event	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional Games	<input type="checkbox"/>
International Games (World or European)	<input type="checkbox"/>	National Games	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____			

### 11. When did you first register as a volunteer for Special Olympics

Less than 6 months ago	<input type="checkbox"/>	In the last year	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-3 years ago	<input type="checkbox"/>	4-5 years ago	<input type="checkbox"/>
6-10 years ago	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10 years ago	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 12. Do you currently volunteer for any other organisation?

Yes ☐  
No ☐ (If no, go to question 15)

### 13. Please name/ list any other organisation(s) you currently volunteer for:

(If you do not wish to name any organisation, please outline the sector the organisation is involved with i.e. sports, disability sports, elderly care, disability care etc)

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14. Have you EVER, in the past, volunteered for an organisation other than Special Olympics?

(You should only include any organisations you are no longer volunteering for)

Yes ☐

No ☐ (If no, go to question 17)

15. Please name/ list any other organisation(s) you have previously volunteered for:

(If you do not wish to name any organisation, please outline the sector the organisation is involved with i.e. sports, disability sports, elderly care, disability care etc)

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16. Is there any specific reason why you are no longer volunteering for this organisation (please tick all the options that apply to you)

Work commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of opportunities in your area	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of interest	<input type="checkbox"/>
You didn't enjoy your experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	It was a one off event	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____			

17. Which of the follow best describes your role in Special Olympics?

(Please tick all that apply)

Head Coach	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assistant Coach	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chaperone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Administration Support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Club role	<input type="checkbox"/>	Committee Member	<input type="checkbox"/>
(including treasure, secretary etc)		(Current or past)	
Event Volunteer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sports Official	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Please Specify: _____			

### Section 3: Motivation

There are many theories which attempt to explain why someone decides to volunteer. By studying this, we can gain a better understanding of why some people choose to volunteer and organisations such as Special Olympics can adapt how they manage their recruitment, training and retention strategies in order to meet the needs of their volunteers.

This section of the questionnaire focuses on your reasons for volunteering for Special Olympics. Read each individual statement carefully and select the answer that best applies to you. There are no right or wrong answers to this so please ensure you answer each item as truthfully as possible.

## Q. 18

	not true at all	not true	somewhat untrue	neither true nor untrue	somewhat true	true	very true
Because I find it stimulating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because I get a good feel out of it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because I enjoy the effort I invest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because I enjoy the interaction I have with the athletes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because volunteering is fundamental to who I am	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because volunteering is integral to my life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because it personifies my values and beliefs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because it contributes to my development as a person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because it is moving me towards my personal goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because it allows me to achieve my personal goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because I don't want to let my athletes down	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because if I quit/ stopped it would mean I'd failed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because I feel responsible for my athletes' performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because I feel pressure from myself to win	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To be respected by others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To get recognition from others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because I want to be appreciated by others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because I like the extrinsic rewards (i.e prizes) associated with winning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often think my volunteering efforts are a waste of time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sometimes I don't know why I volunteer anymore	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sometimes I feel the costs outweigh the benefits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sometimes I question my desire to continue volunteering	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. I started volunteering because I know or am related to an athlete in Special Olympics:

True ☐

False ☐

#### Section 4: Special Olympics

This section of the questionnaire provides you with the opportunity to voice your opinion on the procedures Special Olympics have in place for the recruitment, training and retention of their volunteers. Research has shown that the structure of the organisation can greatly impact the decision of an individual to volunteer with that organisation. It is therefore important for us to know if there is anything in particular you feel Special Olympics do well or indeed need to improve on in relation to their volunteers.

Please feel free to give personal experiences and be as candid as possible with your opinions as all information is kept confidential and there will be no way for Special Olympics staff or indeed other volunteers to know if you have taken part in the research.

20. What was your experience of the recruitment process? i.e. was the role/organisation well organised, was there an interview and did the process take long?

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21. As a volunteer, do you feel that you have the opportunity to be involved in any of the decisions that may affect the organisation? This can include at club, regional or national level

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22. Should volunteers have more powers to make decisions? Please explain your answer

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23. Do you feel communication from the organisation is effective in ensuring volunteers and the general public are informed about the organisation? Please explain your answer

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24. Overall, would you rate your experience with Special Olympics as being positive or negative?

Positive

☐

(Skip Q25)

Negative

☐

Both

☐

25. Can you explain your answer?

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26. If your experience was negative, what do you feel Special Olympics could have done better to improve your experience?

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27. Will you continue to volunteer for Special Olympics?

Yes

☐

No

☐

I don't know

☐

28. Please explain the reason for your answer

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29. Do you feel that Special Olympics, has done anything to influence your decision about whether to continue to volunteer with them in the future? (This can be either positive or negative)

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30. Have you ever been offered any training by Special Olympics which you feel has helped improve the role you perform within the organisation (coach, event manager etc)? Has this training helped you in your personal or work life?

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31. In your opinion, does Special Olympics have any procedures or strategies in place for ensuring volunteers stay involved with the organisation? Please explain the reason for your answer

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32. From your experience of volunteering for other organisations, do you feel there is anything that Special Olympics could learn from those organisations in relation to providing a positive experience for their volunteers and keeping volunteers involved?

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33. Would you recommend Special Olympics as an organisation to someone who was looking to volunteer? Please provide a reason for your answer

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34. Finally, is there anything else you would like to add that you feel would be relevant to this questionnaire or is there any of the points previously covered that you would like to elaborate on?

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You have come to the end of the questionnaire

Should you wish to receive the overall results of the questionnaire please provide an email address and/or postal address below. If you provide this, this will be kept on a password encrypted file and will not be linked to the answers you have provided in anyway.

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**Thank you for taking the time to complete this  
questionnaire!**

**The answers you have provided may help Special Olympics or  
indeed other organisations to improve their volunteer  
strategies to help them provide the vital service they provide.**

## Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

### **Volunteer Management and motives within Special Olympics: A Cross- Cultural Analysis**

**Please delete as appropriate:**

Have you received and read a copy of the Information Letter?	Yes	No
Do you understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate in this study and that they have the right to withdraw at any time and for any reason?	Yes	No
Do you understand that confidentiality is assured and that no names will be used in any write ups of the study?	Yes	No
Do you agree to be interviewed by the researcher and for this interview to be recorded?	Yes	No
Would you like to receive a summary report of the findings of the study?	Yes	No

I \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have received an information letter outlining the research conducted to date as well as the interview schedule. I am happy to take part in the interview and for my interview to be recorded. I am also aware that I can withdraw from the research or stop the interview at any stage.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

National Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Interview Schedule – Staff

### Interview Schedule - Staff

1. Tell me about your background within Special Olympics
  - a. Length of time
  - b. How you became involved
  - c. What roles have you done
2. Have you seen the report of the findings so far?
  - a. What are your overall thoughts?
  - b. Was there anything that surprised you?
  - c. Are there any points you agree or disagree with?
3. Are there any policies within Special Olympics that help retain volunteers?
4. Do you think there is anything else the organisation does to help retain volunteers?
  - a. Are there any processes currently in place?
5. Is there anything else you feel could be done within a volunteer policy?
  - a. Are there any roles currently done by staff that volunteers could be doing?
6. If there were no restrictions (money or staff or other resources) what do you think the gold standard volunteer policy would consist of?
7. What are the best parts of Special Olympics?
  - a. Can other organisations learn anything from Special Olympics?
  - b. Can Special Olympics learn anything from other organisations?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Appendix E: Interview Schedule – Volunteers

### Interview Schedule - Volunteers

1. Tell me about your background within Special Olympics
  - a. Length of time
  - b. How you became involved
  - c. What roles have you done
2. Have you volunteered with any other organisations?
  - a. What organisations
  - b. Are you still involved
3. Have you seen the report of the findings so far?
  - a. What are your overall thoughts?
  - b. Was there anything that surprised you?
  - c. Are there any points you agree or disagree with?
  - d. What are your experiences of communication within the organisation?
  - e. How do you feel about the recruitment process?
4. Are you aware of any policies within Special Olympics that help retain volunteers?
5. Do you think there is anything else the organisation do to help retain volunteers?
6. Is there anything else you feel could be done within a volunteer policy?
7. What are the best parts of Special Olympics?
  - a. What do you enjoy most?
  - b. Would you recommend volunteering to others?
  - c. Can other organisations learn anything from Special Olympics?
  - d. Can Special Olympics learn anything from other organisations?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Appendix F: Ethical Approval – RG3 Form

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

### RG3 Filter Committee Report Form

Project Title	Investigating Volunteer Management and Motives within Special Olympics – A cross cultural analysis
Chief Investigator	Prof David Hassan
Filter Committee	School of Sport


This form should be completed by Filter Committees for all research project applications in categories A to D (\*for categories A, B, and D the University's own application form – RG1a and RG1b – will have been submitted; for category C, the national, or ORECNI, application form will have been submitted).

Where substantial changes are required the Filter Committee should return an application to the Chief Investigator for clarification/amendment; the Filter Committee can reject an application if it is thought to be unethical, inappropriate, incomplete or not valid/viable.

**Only when satisfied that its requirements have been met in full and any amendments are complete, the Filter Committee should make one of the following recommendations:**

The research proposal is complete, of an appropriate standard and is in

- category A and the study may proceed\* ☒
- category B and the study must be submitted to the University's Research Ethics Committee\*\* Please indicate briefly the reason(s) for this categorisation ☐
- category C and the study must be submitted to ORECNI along with the necessary supporting materials from the Research Governance Section\*\*\* ☐
- category D and the study must be submitted to the University's Research Ethics Committee\*\* ☐

Signed: 	Date: 28/2/16
Chairperson/Administrator of Filter Committee	

\*The application form and this assessment should now be returned to the Chief Investigator. The Filter Committee should retain a copy of the complete set of forms.

\*\* The application form and this assessment should now be returned to the Chief Investigator so that he/she can submit the application to the UUREC via the Research Governance section. The Filter Committee should retain a copy of the complete set of forms for their own records.

\*\*\* The application form and this assessment should now be returned to the Chief Investigator so that he/she can prepare for application to a NRES/ORECNI committee. The Filter Committee should retain a copy of the complete set of forms for their own records.

For all categories, details of the application and review outcome should be minuted using the agreed format and forwarded to the Research Governance section

## Appendix G: National Program Sample Report

### Introduction

Special Olympics Ireland (SOIre) volunteers have been taking part in an online survey as part of a PhD study through Ulster University supported by Special Olympics Europe Eurasia (SOEE) entitled 'A cross-cultural analysis of the management and motives of SO volunteers'. The research aims to provide SO as an organisation an insight into who their volunteers are, why they volunteer and what strengths the volunteers believe the organisation has in terms of recruitment and in particular, retention of volunteers. It is envisaged that the organisation may be able to use the research to assist in structuring volunteer policies in order to help increase volunteer retention rates and the numbers of active volunteers.

### Research aims

In order to meet the aims outlined thus far, the following research aims were identified:

- To conduct a cross-cultural analysis of the motives of volunteers
- To determine the motives of volunteers within Special Olympics
- To gain an understanding of the volunteers views of the processes and structures of volunteer management and retention within Special Olympics
- To determine if the policies surrounding volunteer management vary between cultures and National Programs in order to allow for a better understanding as to whether an overarching strategy would be suitable in relation to the management of volunteers within third sector organisations
- To inform policy advisement for Special Olympics as a whole in terms of the management processes involved in volunteer recruitment, training and retention
- To outline lessons to be learned for Special Olympics and other organisations

### Report aims

The purpose of this report is to summarise the preliminary findings of the questionnaire from SOIre. This will provide key stakeholders within the organisation: a Regional Development Officer for volunteers, volunteer manager, Regional or National Director and a volunteer co-ordinator, the opportunity to review the findings with the view to taking part in a short interview, either in person, via telephone or via skype. These interviews will allow the views of the organisation to be combined with those of the volunteers. Staff within the organisation can provide their expert views and may have a better understanding of what can realistically be achieved thus enabling them to use the volunteer findings to make recommendations for the National Program moving forward.

Interviews will take place at a time and location most suited to the participant. It is envisaged that interviews will last a maximum of 60 minutes and will be recorded using an audio recording device for the sole purposes of transcribing and analysing data. Confidentiality will be assured and no names or identifying features of participants will be published in final reports.

Following the interviews, final analysis on all data will be completed by the research with the full findings, including any recommendations and an analysis of any cultural differences being provided to each participating National Program and to SOEE.

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

In section 1 of the questionnaire, participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to themselves; ages, gender, employment status etc in order to provide an understanding of who generally volunteers for SOIre. Section 2 of the questionnaire looked at their volunteering background; have they volunteered for other organisations, what industries were these in etc. The aim of this was to assess the range of experience of the volunteers and perhaps help SOIre determine if there are lessons that can be learned from other organisations and how the experience of their volunteers can help SOIre.

62.77% of respondents were female and 36.17% male suggesting that female volunteers within SOIre outnumber their male counterparts by 2:1. As shown in *Table 1*, the most common age range of volunteers is 50 – 64 years old with only 11.29% being classified as youth volunteers (16 – 24 year olds). Perhaps due to the age ranges, the majority of volunteers (55.85%) are married with many also having commitments to child, adult or elderly dependents (46.24%). Additionally, the age range is partly reflected in the employment status of volunteers with 10.70% stating their status as full time students with 75.93% either employed (full or part time) or retired. However, it is interesting to note that of the 97 volunteers who responded with which industry they currently work in, over 52.58% (51) work in either education, healthcare or local government. This is possibly one area that can be looked at in relation to matching volunteers to their volunteering role in order to utilise their expertise within the organisation. The experience of the volunteers based on their length of time within the organisation shows both the positive experiences they have to keep them coming back and also the ability of the organisation to retain volunteers. 58.02% of respondents have been with SOIre for over 6 years and 27.08% have been volunteering for over 10 years. However, it is imperative to air on the side of caution as this may also indicate that only more experienced volunteers were interested in taking part in the research. This may also apply to the age ranges of volunteers as those older volunteers may potentially be more inclined to express their opinions or feel like they have the experience which enables them to have their say through taking part in the research.



Age Range	Response	%
16 – 18	4	2.15
18 – 24	17	9.14
25 – 34	25	13.44
35 – 49	47	25.27
50 – 64	63	33.87
65+	30	16.13
Answered	186	

*Table 1.* Age ranges of volunteers within Special Olympics Ireland respondents

56.98% of SOIre volunteers have, in the past volunteered for other organisations, however, only 44.20% are currently volunteering for others. Whilst being a one off event was a key reason for 18.52% of respondents, the most common reasons for no longer having involvement with other organisations were work or family commitments. This in itself may indicate their desire to continue within SOIre more so than other organisations, however this would require further investigation.

#### Volunteer motivation

In order to assess volunteer motivation, the Coach Motivation Questionnaire (CMQ) was adapted by replacing the word coach with volunteer in 4 of the statements. Volunteers were asked to rate each statement on a likert scale ranging from not true at all (1) to very true (7). The statements within the scale fit within the framework outlined by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) continuum ranging from Intrinsically motivated to Amotivated. The statements pertaining to each area within the continuum can be seen in *Table 2* and show the range of statements used to allow volunteers to give a true reflection on why they volunteer with SOIre.

Continuum	Statements
Intrinsic	<i>Because I find it stimulating</i>
	<i>Because I get a good feeling out of it</i>
	<i>Because I enjoy the effort I invest</i>
	<i>Because I enjoy the interaction I have with athletes</i>
Integrated	<i>Because volunteering is fundamental to who I am</i>
	<i>Because volunteering is integral to my life</i>
	<i>Because it personifies my values and beliefs</i>
Identified	<i>Because it contributes to my development as a person</i>
	<i>Because it is moving me toward my personal goals</i>
	<i>Because it allows me to achieve my personal goals</i>
Introjected	<i>Because I don't want to let my athletes down</i>
	<i>Because if I quit it would mean I'd failed</i>

	<i>Because I feel responsible for the athletes' performance</i>
	<i>Because I feel pressure from myself to win</i>
External	<i>To be respected by others</i>
	<i>To get recognition from others</i>
	<i>Because I want to be appreciated by others</i>
	<i>Because I like the extrinsic rewards (i.e., money) associated with winning</i>
Amotivation	<i>I often think my volunteering efforts are a waste of time</i>
	<i>Sometimes I don't know why I volunteer anymore</i>
	<i>Sometimes I feel the costs outweigh the benefits</i>
	<i>Sometimes I question my desire to continue volunteering</i>

*Table 2: Statements used within the CMQ and their associated area within the SDT continuum*

It can be seen from the results in *Table 3* that SOIre volunteers rate their motives higher than the CMQ mean in the areas of Intrinsic, Integrated, Identified and introjected motivation. Whilst external motivation rates higher, this difference is not significant. Additionally, they rate their levels of amotivation lower than the CMQ mean, perhaps suggesting that SOIre volunteers are more likely to continue to volunteer than within other organisations or research which has utilised the CMQ.

SDT	CMQ Mean	SO Ireland
Intrinsic	5.89	6.20
Integrated	4.7	5.39
Identified	4.72	4.92
Introjected	3.81	4.01
External Regulation	2.91	2.98
Amotivation	2.48	2.05

*Table 3. A comparison between the responses of SOIre volunteers and the CMQ mean responses within the SDT continuum*

Finally, throughout the questionnaire, comments suggest that there appears to be a high number of volunteers who are family members of SOIre athletes with comments like “families do everything” and that “club committees were relatives of the athletes”. This however, may be contradictory to the responses in relation to motivation as participants were asked to answer true or false to the question ‘I started to volunteer as I know or am related to a SO athlete’ with only 26% answering true and 74% answering false.

#### Volunteer engagement

Volunteer numbers within SOIre are divided into regions. Within Special Olympics Ulster (SOU), there are approximately 4,000 registered volunteers as defined by those appearing

on Raiser's Edge. Due to the unique geographical breakdown with SOU, volunteer numbers can be further broken down into 3,125 volunteers registered within Northern Ireland. It was agreed with SOIre and SOU that for the purposes of this research, the questionnaire would be sent to Northern Ireland based volunteers. 3125 emails were sent out, 926 returned as failed to deliver leaving 2199 volunteers receiving the email. A total of 212 volunteers responded to the initial email equating to a response rate of 9.64%.

187 volunteers answered the question on whether or not they are an active volunteer i.e. have volunteered in any way in the last 12 months. 24.6% (45) of respondents are not classified as active. Of these 45, 22 (48.9%) stated work or family commitments as their reason for no longer being active. However, it is interesting to note that 10 of the 45 (22.2%) inactive volunteers stated a lack of opportunity in their area or that the event was a one off. This perhaps suggests an opportunity for increasing communication with new volunteers which could lead to a lower level of inactive volunteers.

Overall, whilst it is clear that there are areas in which engagement from SOIre volunteers is very strong, the research suggests that there is some room for improvement. The strong recruitment levels for this research signifies the enthusiasm of the volunteers to be involved and have an input into the organisation.

### **Policies and procedures**

Section 4 of the questionnaire focused on garnering the opinions and knowledge of volunteers in relation to how the organisation operates and how it currently manages volunteers.

### **Recruitment process**

Many volunteers outlined a positive experience during the recruitment process with many stating that the *"process was easy"* and *"clearly laid out"*. One volunteer stated that the *"recruitment process was very good, like joining an extended family & not like a job at all"*. *Whilst these comments show a positive experience, this is not consistent throughout the research. A number of participants spoke of a lengthy process with some delays caused by multiple issues including photographs being lost, time taken to have Access NI verified at police stations and then having to go to Dublin to be processed. One strength of the organisation appears to be the ability to change and improve processes; it "took longer 13 years ago as the process has now changed" and "today it is much quicker as a lot is carried out online"*.

Finally, whilst recruitment and the registration process appears to be an evolving and improving process and volunteers in general are knowledgeable and appreciative of this, a theme occurring within this area is that regardless of how short, long or well organised the process is to become registered, a number have felt the follow up support and contact to help them find a volunteering role or club was lacking. There was no negative comments at all regarding dealings with staff, in fact, it was pointed out that staff were *"very helpful"*,

*“very informative” and “very welcoming (and created) a fun experience”.* Despite this, they did feel that it took *“some time to hear from Special Olympics about taking up the volunteer role I was recruited for”* and that *“follow up support and contact has been scarce”* which may in itself be a cause of the inactivity of some volunteers with a lack of information on opportunities. One question that can therefore be asked is, how can the organisation continue to improve and is there a more standardised procedure that can be implemented in order to improve contact with new volunteers in particular, to increase the awareness of the opportunities, thus improving retention rates of active volunteers.

### Organisational Involvement

Although it is acknowledged that the terminology of ‘organisational involvement’ is a broad term that may encompass many areas, it is used for the purposes of this report to provide an indication of how volunteers see and understand their potential for involvement within the organisations structures and decision making and how these structures and policies may potentially be used to help increase retention rates.

In relation to decision making, there are large discrepancies, both in whether volunteers currently feel involved and in regards to whether they believe volunteers should have more involvement in the decision making process. The majority of participants believe they do have the opportunity to input into decisions that are made, particularly at club level and to a lesser extent at regional, with little or no input at national level. Amongst those who do not feel like they have an input, it was suggested that as a new member, they do not feel they have the right to have an input, they *“do not interfere”* or that they are *“not particularly aware of what is going on in other parts of the organisation”*. The role of the volunteer appears to play a big role in their involvement in decision making; *“being just a volunteer, I have no input....As an event manager I had an input in how the event was managed”*. Indeed, event volunteers were a recurring theme with a number outlining that those only involved in events do not have the knowledge to input into other areas although they are provided the opportunity to feedback on events.

Overall, decision making is an area that appears to be quite divided amongst volunteers. The general consensus is that the organisation is structured and run well at a local level with volunteers feeling valued, however, more consultation, communication and transparency is required as volunteers feel they could add great value based on their areas of expertise. Part of this perceived ability to add value is due to the fact they *“are the ones on the ground working with the athletes”*. One final thought that stands out in relation to decision making within the organisation is that *“the athletes should be more empowered with decisions. The SO is about the athlete”*. This highlights that regardless of their own opinions on what decisions they should be able to make, the focus of volunteers remains on the athletes.

### Conclusions

Overall, it is quite clear to see that volunteers within SOIre are very well informed, engaged and wish to contribute for the good of SO and its’ athletes. The organisation itself generally has a very positive impact on the experiences of the volunteers and this does encourage many volunteers to remain involved in the program. However, as with any organisation which relies on volunteers, there are areas in which volunteers feel improvements can be

made. These focus primarily on communication and transparency both in relation to the dissemination of information and opportunities but also regarding the procedures the organisation has in place.

The information contained in this report outlines a summary of the key findings in relation to SOLre. It is envisaged that these will provide a base for discussion with SOLre staff and stakeholders to determine if and how this data can impact policies within the volunteer sector to develop strategies aimed at enhancing volunteer retention rates.